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Challenging Extractive Participation: Spatiality, Power, and Lessons from PDC Places

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Abstract

This paper re-reads participation through the lens of spatial politics, arguing that spatiality is not a neutral backdrop for relational processes but a contested terrain. This terrain is shaped by power, exclusion, and the situated resistances that emerge within it. We use “resistance” to refer to agonistic practices of imagination — acts that resist erasure, marginalization, and the extractive and solutionist logics that often underpin design interventions. Drawing on decolonial thought and the notion of epistemic extractivism, we examine how Participatory Design, when not critically attuned to these dynamics, risks reproducing centralized models of knowledge production. These conditions are not peripheral to design — they are already there, and they cannot be ignored. They are entangled in place: shaping how entities (human, non-human, less-than- and more-than-human) are confined, erased, or rendered dominant. Participatory Design enters this terrain. It does not operate outside of it. Therefore, we argue for the need to explicitly address the spatial dimension of oppression in Participatory Design practices — to recognize spatiality as a structuring force that defines who may participate, how, and on what terms. We present PDC Places as a curatorial and infrastructural experiment within the Participatory Design Conference 2026, conceived as a decentralized constellation of place-based initiatives, problematizing entangled forms of oppression from their situatedness. A constellation suggests neither hierarchy nor homogeneity. It is a pattern perceived across distance, composed of bodies that maintain their own trajectories. Thinking Places as a constellation resists central-peripheral logics and instead foregrounds relational alignment without subsumption. What connects them is not thematic uniformity, but shared tensions around power, spatiality, and participation. Rather than satellite

events, Places were framed as situated ecosystems grounded in local urgencies, networks, and struggles that need to be identified, and understood to envision more just Participatory Design engagements. Through this initiative, we sought to challenge extractive participation — where knowledge is often gathered and mobilized toward innovation within frameworks that ignore or flatten local struggles — and to foreground *Place* as an ethical and political condition of participation. We argue here that challenging extractive participation requires learning to attune to situated practices already in motion. This paper aims to further articulate a theoretical positioning on spatiality and power in Participatory Design by engaging with the Places presented at the PDC2026 conference, functioning there as distributed enactments of these tensions.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Participatory design;

Keywords

Spatial politics, Power asymmetries, Epistemic extractivism

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1 Introduction

Participatory Design (PD) has long positioned itself as a practice committed to inclusion, collaboration, and democratic engagement. Yet, as the field has expanded across global contexts and institutional frameworks, participation itself has become increasingly contested and ambiguous. This ambivalence stems from a tension at the heart of PD: while it seeks to redistribute agency, it often operates within institutional infrastructures that centralize validation, authorship, and visibility. Participation thus unfolds within asymmetrical circuits of recognition, where some knowledge travels and

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others remain located. Participation risks there becoming symbolic, procedural, universalistic, or instrumental, rather than truly transformative and just. Participation itself can become extractive when *situated knowledges*, memories, and struggles are mobilized within institutional circuits without questioning how subjects and *ways of being and knowing* are already placed within intersecting axes of colonial, patriarchal, and racialized power. From this positional stance, “place” here does not simply refer to physical space but rather carries an experiential and relational density: it is sedimented through memory, affection, repetition, and struggle. In this sense, it is not something external to the subjects inhabiting the space but is rather relationally constitutive. We are not pre-existing beings who then enter relation with place but are rather constituted through relations — with other humans, with histories, with more-than-human ecologies, with temporalities and territories. Relationality is not additive; it is ontological. Yet these relations are not necessarily neutral or harmonious. They are shaped by intersecting axes of colonial, patriarchal, racialized, and capitalist power. Territories are shaped by shared memory and collective practices, but also by imposed borders, forced separations, and regimes of exclusion. Place can sustain belonging and solidarity, but it can also be the outcome of displacement, segregation, and containment.

Drawing on decolonial thought and the notion of epistemic extractivism [1], [White in 2], [Gutiérrez in 2], [3], [4], [5], [6], we examine how PD can reproduce centralized models of knowledge production by abstracting place into the essentialist understanding of “context” and community into “stakeholders”. Such translations neutralize situated divergences and reframe relational worlds within institutional regimes of legibility.

Communities generate knowledge continuously through processes of organizing, conflict, and survival, often beyond the reach of academic validation [7]. When participatory processes translate lived struggles into stakeholder categories, they risk rendering this movement-based learning invisible. Recognizing epistemic extractivism therefore also requires acknowledging that knowledge production is already taking place in territories before design intervenes.

Challenging extractive participation therefore requires more than acknowledging spatial politics; it requires refusing the reduction of situatedness [8] to “context” and rethinking participation beyond the “stakeholder” model — toward what Marisol de la Cadena calls a “complex we” as “a shared condition from which “self” and “other” emerge relationally as intra-acted assertions of divergence” [9, p. 478].

PDC Places, developed within the framework of the Participatory Design Conference 2026, is conceived as a decentralized constellation of place-based initiatives, foregrounding ecosystems, local urgencies, and plural voices rather than stand-alone events. Through this initiative, we sought to decentralize PD and to cultivate modes of listening capable of engaging *situated knowledges* formed in struggle, marginalization, and refusal.

“I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.

[...] Feminism loves another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood. Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision. Feminism is about a critical vision consequent upon a critical positioning in unhomogeneous gendered social space.¹⁶ Translation is always interpretive, critical, and partial. Here is a ground for conversation, rationality, and objectivity — which is power-sensitive, not pluralist, “conversation”. [...] Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular”. [8, pp. 589-590]

By articulating this theoretical positioning, we address the selected Places as distributed enactments of a spatially — i.e. attuned to their situatedness — grounded critique of extractive participation.

To rethink participation, we must rethink *placeness*; not as backdrop, but as political condition. The PDC Places initiative was conceived as an experiment in this direction. Rather than treating local events as satellites orbiting a central conference, PDC Places proposed a distributed constellation of situated gatherings, rooted in local ecosystems and shaped by specific urgencies. It sought to foreground place — the ground from which we design — as an epistemic and political condition of participation, and to question extractive and centralized models of knowledge production within PD itself.

This contribution develops a theoretical positioning around the notions of spatial politics, epistemic extractivism, and decolonial PD, and reflects on how PDC Places attempted to operationalize these concerns. The first part articulates a critical re-reading of participation through spatiality and power. The second part briefly narrates the constellation of selected Places as situated enactments of these tensions.

1.1 Challenging Extractive Participation

1.1.1 Extractivism Beyond Resources: Participation as Epistemic Extraction.

Epistemic extractivism [1], White in [2], [3], [4] occurs when knowledge, memory, and situated practices are mined from specific contexts, translated into academic categories, and circulated within centralised institutions, often without altering the structures that produced marginalisation in the first place. Participatory or community-oriented forms, despite their emancipatory aspirations, are not immune to this dynamic. Communities become “stakeholders.” Memories become “inputs.” Territories become “contexts for cases.” Participation becomes a method for accessing local knowledge, which is then re-articulated within dominant epistemological frameworks. The spatial location of knowledge production remains asymmetrical: peripheral contexts feed central conferences, journals, and institutions.

Conferences, journals, and funding structures frequently function as centres of epistemic validation. Knowledge produced in peripheral contexts travels toward these centres, where it is reformulated, cited, and institutionalised. Meanwhile, the conditions under which that knowledge emerged often remain unseen. This spatial asymmetry reveals that participation alone does not decentralise knowledge production.

In this configuration, space is treated as a site of intervention rather than as a politically structured terrain. The “local” becomes

a resource to be mobilised. Participation, in turn, risks reinforcing the very asymmetries it seeks to challenge.

Challenging extractive participation therefore requires confronting not only methodological issues, but spatial ones: Who speaks at the centre? Whose knowledge remains located, untranslated, or unheard?

Embracing place also invites us into epistemological practices of humble not-knowing [10]. In whatever way you try to capture or extract a place, it is always more and flows across categories and analytical concepts. Not-knowing does not mean that you potentially could know, it means that it goes beyond what can be known with traditional scientific inquiry. What you humbly can do is to establish a complex contact zone, a cautious and sensitive probing which can include experiences, feelings, observations, intuitions, conversations but that reject simple extractivism (ibid).

1.2 Re-reading Spatiality: Power, Exclusion, Situated Resistance

Drawing from María Lugones' concept of *spatiality of the praxis* [11], we understand space as deeply shaped by power — determining who can move, speak, act, and belong, and as something actively shaped by intermeshed oppressions — and, crucially, by practices of survival, memory, and situated agency. In this sense, spatiality is not secondary to action but constitutive of it. As Lugones reminds us, where one may, must, or cannot be is never a neutral fact: it reflects histories of domination, intermeshed oppressions, and strategies of marginalization.

Space is never neutral. Where one may, must, or cannot be reflects histories of domination and strategies of marginalisation. There are racialised geographies in which place becomes both a site of exclusion and of potential resistance. Post-colonial borders overwrite porous spatialities. Migrant communities are structurally segregated in peripheries and labour camps. Displacement is not only spatial but ontological: certain bodies are marked as out of place [12], as produced others, denied full participation in the imagined “national body”.

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”” [13, p. 9]

“Racial ‘Others’ and their presence are seen as the cause of ‘national ugliness’ because it is imagined that before their arrival the nation was ‘beautiful.’ But now the nation is ‘ugly.’ It is the presence of non-nationals in the nation, the non-We in the We space, that makes the nation ugly, disfiguring it, infecting it, dirtying it. This aesthetic schema of beauty and ugliness constructs differences between insiders and outsiders. [...] The same associative chains are also visible in the debate on national identity discussed in the first episode, where national ‘Others’ are often defined as *Ausländer* or immigrants, and immigrants are often defined as illegal immigrants. If immigrants are illegal’, they are lawless-, if they are lawless»they

are criminals’, if they are criminals, they are dangerous’, if they are dangerous, one fears them; if one fears them, one has the right to be hostile or even to eliminate them. A chain of equivalents legitimates racism by fixing identities in their place: immigrants - illegal immigrants - lawless - criminal - dangerous - fearful.” [14, pp. 105 and 74]

Spatial control intersects with epistemic violence. As Rolando Vázquez [6], [15] argues, modernity’s epistemic order erases non-Western, Indigenous, and migratory temporalities. Knowledge produced in struggle is rendered unintelligible within dominant frameworks. Participation, if uncritically enacted, risks reproducing this erasure — when it operates within institutional logics that seek clarity, control, and deliverables, thereby filtering out *knowledges* that resist translation, abstraction, or resolution.

PD must therefore confront how it contributes to mapping and stabilising these geographies rather than questioning them. Arturo Escobar [16] warns of “placelessness” produced through development and design practices that abstract local lifeworlds into universalised solutions. Placelessness, as he suggests, is not simply a geographic condition but a symptom of the modern epistemic order — one that detaches culture and identity from their embodied, grounded, and lived contexts. Escobar emphasizes that place continues to matter. Even participatory processes can translate place into data, memory into narrative fragments, community into manageable categories — often at the cost of situated knowledge, plurality, and voice.

Re-reading spatiality means recognising *place* as a politically charged terrain, where power is sedimented but also contested. Margins are not simply sites of lack; they are sites of knowledge, refusal, and alternative world-making. To recognise margins as sites of world-making requires resisting the developmental gaze that frames them as problems to be solved. Instead, margins can be understood as epistemic frontiers where alternative political imaginaries are rehearsed and sustained. PD must therefore question whether it approaches margins as partners in transformation or as reservoirs of authenticity.

Situatedness is not merely contextual specificity; it is an epistemological stance asking for less essentialist and universalist, more embodied forms of *knowledges*. In this light, the question becomes how PD can truly engage with these margins — not by reproducing modern logics of participation, but by cultivating an increased awareness of how design itself, and the spaces it operates in, are political as sites of (epistemic) resistance [17], [18]. To do so means questioning not only what is designed and who participates, but also how the politics of designing shape what is made visible, thinkable, and possible.

1.3 From Inclusion to Decentering: The Political Intent of PDC Places

The PDC Places call was shaped by these concerns. It did not simply invite additional events; it sought to discuss the spatial politics within the conference itself. Conceiving Places as an infrastructural experiment means intervening not only in formats, but in the underlying architectures of recognition and circulation. Conferences function as infrastructures that concentrate visibility and

validation. Decentring therefore requires rethinking how knowledge travels, how credit is distributed, and how situated practices remain accountable to their territories rather than being absorbed into central narratives.

Rather than treating PDC Places as satellites, we framed them as a constellation: decentralised, place-based initiatives unfolding prior to the main event. We explicitly asked for ecosystems, not one-off activities. We invited proposals grounded in existing networks, struggles, and local urgencies. We asked participants to engage actors within and beyond academia — activists, organisers, community members — and to address power asymmetries, conflict, and situated tensions with forms of knowledge production that are more situated and embodied, and less universalist.

The call foregrounded questions such as:

How do we acknowledge and disrupt power relations in PD processes?

What does it mean to participate from the margins as sites of resistance?

How can PD move beyond extractive, techno-centric frameworks?

How can we learn with and from places, recognising memory and knowledge as inherently situated?

These questions were not rhetorical. They aimed to provoke a shift from inclusion toward decentring. Decentring does not simply mean multiplying sites of participation. It entails questioning where authority, authorship, and agenda-setting reside. It requires redistributing not only voice, but also interpretative power: who frames the problem, who defines relevance, and who decides what counts as knowledge. Instead of asking how to “include” marginal voices within existing structures, we seek here to ask how PD might learn to listen differently, hearing what modern epistemologies have rendered unintelligible, without willing to create shortcuts or reduce complexity into a consensual mode of knowledge production.

Listening, however, cannot be reduced to receptivity. Speaking from the margin is an act of resistance precisely because dominant structures are not organised to hear it [19]. Yet the centre often seeks to incorporate marginal voices without relinquishing authority. Listening, in this context, cannot mean absorbing difference into the existing framework. Dialogue, as Freire [20] argues, is not a neutral exchange but a political encounter grounded in humility and mutual transformation, one that presupposes the recognition of the other as a subject of knowledge rather than as a beneficiary of inclusion. This also requires the recognition of how the other has been produced as such: *marked as different, marked as some others as stranger than other others* [12], *classed as less- than, as less educable, as less desirable, as less knowledgeable, as less valuable* [21]. In this light, listening requires confronting one’s own location and worldview within asymmetrical structures of power and remaining open to forms of knowledge that challenge institutional certainties. Something that also provides us with opportunities to “work knowledges together” [22] where we respectfully learn together across diverse knowledge systems.

These theoretical commitments translated into specific curatorial criteria for selecting the Places. Rather than evaluating proposals solely on academic merit or thematic relevance to the conference, we sought initiatives that: (1) explicitly engaged with spatial asymmetries — who can participate, from where, and on what terms;

(2) demonstrated accountability to local struggles, networks, and ecologies rather than treating place as a resource for extraction; (3) embraced friction, dissent, or agonism over consensus-driven participation; and (4) resisted translation into stakeholder models or solutionist frameworks. The Places were not chosen as exemplary cases of “good participation” but as situated enactments of the very tensions, between centrality and marginality, legibility and opacity, extraction and reciprocity, that our theoretical framework seeks to problematize.

1.4 The Constellation in Practice: Narrating the Places

Before narrating each initiative individually, we briefly synthesise how the theoretical concerns of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism manifest across the constellation as a whole. Across the Places, several common, though not universal, patterns emerge. First, many initiatives position margins as epistemic frontiers rather than as deficits: rural depopulation zones, polarised urban districts, post-colonial borderlands, and contested peace/conflict terrains become sites of knowledge production rather than intervention. Second, extractive participation is resisted through methodological commitments to slowness, impermanence, and non-translation: walking, temporary commons, ephemeral disturbances, and hybrid workbooks privilege forms of knowing that resist capture into deliverables or policy recommendations. Third, spatiality is treated not as context but as a relational and contested medium — shaped by histories of displacement, segregation, and racialised bordering, but also by practices of communing (the practices of place- and community-making as a radical alternative to commodification), solidarity, and refusal. Finally, this constellation reveals that decentring requires infrastructural work: hosting, listening, provisional coalitions, and the redistribution of visibility across sites that are not equally positioned within academic circuits of recognition. These shared orientations do not imply thematic uniformity; they index a family of design practices that foreground place as a political condition.

The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail invites residents, artists, researchers, and curious walkers to collectively create a narrated atlas in Modigliana between the Acerreta and Tramazzo valleys. Here participants walk along the trail where they, through written notes and sketches, try to articulate the rich entangled layers of history, culture, ecology, and lived experience in the area. This is place-making that embraces walking as an aesthetic and political act where sensitive attention is brought to silenced voices, neglected stories and ecological tensions.

The Re-Commoning the Rural initiative unfolds in the mountain region of Trentino-South Tyrol (Italy), in collaboration with BASIS Vinschgau-Venosta, a social activation hub created through the reclamation of a former military barrack. In response to depopulation, declining services, and socio-ecological pressures, the Place builds on existing commoning practices that sustain collective life in rural areas. Through a one-day gathering, local actors such as residents, activists, designers, and organisations, explore how PD might support already ongoing practices of care and cooperation.

The Ethics, Values and Culture Symposium takes place at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering (IDE), TU Delft. Through

intersecting lenses, they explore more critical and reflexive approaches concerning mutual recognition, just transitions, empowerment, tensions in design ethics, and pluralistic perspectives, this symposium works at connecting diverse research communities across the three departments, exploring design research's politics as a shared platform for collective inquiry.

PDC Place 2026 - Copenhagen takes place in Sydhavn (Denmark), a socially polarised district shaped by the coexistence of stigmatised working-class neighbourhoods and newly redeveloped waterfront areas. Although PD is deeply embedded in Danish public institutions, the organisers highlight how consensus-oriented traditions can inadvertently reproduce exclusion by privileging familiar voices. The one-day seminar brings together university actors, public servants, and civil society organisations who work to broaden participation beyond dominant groups. Through case presentations, mapping exercises, and situated visits, the Place creates space to reflect on how participation is structured locally and how it might be extended across social and institutional divisions.

Make Your Own Table: Places of Collective Making proposes the table as a material object and a site for collective inquiry bridging Venezuela, Denmark, Germany and Italy. Through a series of local events distributed, supported by a shared workbook, participants are invited to build their own tables as spaces for gathering, negotiation, and shared creation. From community kitchens to feminist bookstores and university living labs, each location experiments with how material practices shape dialogue and coexistence. The resulting constellation connects heterogeneous contexts through shared commitments, allowing each encounter to remain locally rooted, highlighting how participation is mediated by material and embodied arrangements.

PDC Place Maranhão (BR) - Lisbon (PT) 2026: Participatory Design as a Driver of Community-Centred Approaches establishes a transatlantic laboratory connecting the Federal Institute of Maranhão (Brazil) and the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon (Portugal). Building on prior collaborations, the initiative explores PD as a driver for community-centred practices and social innovation across distinct socio-cultural contexts. Through hybrid workshops, theoretical exchanges, and community co-creation labs, the Place creates dialogical spaces where knowledge, practices, and institutional experiences circulate between Brazil and Portugal. Participation is framed not as consultation, but as a relational process through which communities co-produce knowledge, cultivate autonomy, and strengthen collective capacities. By linking institutional platforms, research groups, and community networks, the Place experiments with how PD can sustain transnational solidarities and extend the temporal and geographic reach of the conference beyond its central site.

The Encounter - The Mobile Neighbourhood House on Wheels collaborate in Amsterdam-Noord to explore what it means to host place as a living, relational infrastructure rather than as a fixed site of intervention. Through a caravan and cargo bike that transform into temporary commons in public squares and marketplaces, De Ont/moeting — a neighborhood on wheels — creates low-threshold spaces where residents gather, converse, and co-shape the social fabric of their neighbourhood. The initiative experiments with arts-led, dialogical approaches that privilege trust, reciprocity, and collective imagination over predefined solutions. In a district marked by

social and cultural heterogeneity, the project repositions participation as an embodied and processual practice of hosting, where tacit knowledge, care, and informal solidarities become central. Rather than framing participation as problem-solving, the Place investigates how temporary commons can sustain longer-term infrastructures of co-ownership and relational commitment. In doing so, it extends PD by foregrounding the art of mediated dialogue and by treating place not as context, but as a fragile and mobile commons continuously shaped through encounter.

The Pasts and Futures of Latin American Participatory Design: Thinking and Making Participation from Where Our Feet Stand emerges from the trajectory of Rede Design & Opressão (Design & Oppression Network), a distributed collective of researchers, educators, and activists committed to critical and popular PD across Brazil and Latin America. Rooted in regional epistemologies and social movements, the initiative revisits the genealogies of PD through figures such as Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, Augusto Boal, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and Lélia Gonzalez — foregrounding liberatory pedagogies, embodied methodologies, and struggles against structural racism, sexism, and dependency. Rather than treating these traditions as peripheral influences, the Place positions them as foundational yet historically marginalised within dominant PD narratives. Through a hybrid, multi-site gathering across Brasil, the network creates a translocal space for memory, dialogue, and collective speculation.

Design Happening: Immersive Design Research Lab (IDRL), Downtown Long Beach unfolds at IDRL@Mosaic, the off-campus urban laboratory of the Immersive Design Research Lab, located in the Downtown Long Beach Design District (California). The Place explores how immersive, sensory design practices can cultivate embodied dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Through site-specific, participatory happenings, participants engage in unscripted, co-creative experiences that blur the boundaries between art, design, and everyday life. The initiative investigates “wonder” as a physio-cognitive and affective condition, one that fosters curiosity, attentiveness, and relational openness.

PDC Place: A Collective Envisioning of the Next Chapter of Community-Based Research in Central Kentucky. We Are the Change We Have Been Waiting for in Kentucky is initiated by the Community-based, Applied and Participatory Research Group (CAPR) at the University of Kentucky (USA). Rooted in long-term community-university partnerships, the initiative creates a collective moment of pause to reflect on trajectories of collaboration and to imagine more resilient futures for community-based research. Through dialogues, storytelling sessions, and speculative design exercises, faculty, students, and community partners share experiences of resilience and articulate the tensions that shape equitable collaboration — particularly in contexts marked by budget cuts, rising service demands, and political pressures.

Design Fiction for Peace arrange distributed workshops in Manchester, Ulster, Kharkiv, Espoo, Kaunas and Milan where participants explore how design and literary fiction can be used to foster empathy, dialogue, and sustainable peace in contexts of conflict. Drawing on peace studies and PD they work with place-making within local communities that both include active war zones and areas of post-conflict and non-violent tensions.

Placing through participatory design research unfolds at MUS-LAN - Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã, Portugal), within the framework of the UBI Social Design Days and the DESIS Network. Situated in a mountain region marked by geographic isolation and structural fragilities, the initiative explores how participatory and speculative design can support social innovation in rural territories often marginalised within dominant innovation paradigms. Bringing together doctoral researchers, local communities, and international DESIS Labs, the hybrid session creates a platform for dialogue grounded in ongoing projects. Through shared reflections, collective mapping, and transdisciplinary exchange, participants interrogate how design might move beyond industrial and solution-driven frameworks toward more context-sensitive and relational practices.

2 Conclusions

This contribution has examined participation in Participatory Design through the lens of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism. By foregrounding place as a politically structured condition rather than as contextual background, we have argued that participation unfolds within infrastructures that organise visibility, recognition, and authority. When *situated knowledge* is translated into institutional formats without addressing these infrastructures, participatory processes risk reinforcing asymmetries in the circulation and validation of knowledge.

The PDC Places initiative provided an opportunity to explore these tensions within the conference ecology itself. Conceived as a decentralised constellation of place-based initiatives, Places sought to engage with existing networks, struggles, and forms of situated knowledge prior to and beyond the temporal boundaries of the main event. The diversity of initiatives demonstrated that participatory practices are embedded in heterogeneous political, economic, institutional, and territorial conditions. These conditions shape how participation is articulated, who is heard, and what forms of knowledge become legible within academic arenas.

Reflecting across this constellation, we observe that the Places did not simply apply concepts of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism but returned insights to them. For instance, several initiatives demonstrated that extractivism is resisted not through louder voice but through withdrawal, untranslatability, or ephemeral formats, challenging PD's habitual emphasis on durable outcomes. Others showed that spatiality operates not only as oppression (borders, segregation) but also as a resource for mobile, temporary commoning that evades institutional capture. These insights, grounded in situated practice, suggest that a spatially-attuned PD must learn to recognise when not to translate, when not to stabilise, and when not to centre — lessons that extend beyond conference design to participatory praxis more broadly.

Addressing extractive participation therefore requires sustained attention to the spatial and political arrangements through which PD operates. This involves examining how authority is distributed, how agendas are framed, and how institutional infrastructures mediate encounters between academia and situated practices, marking a set of shared concerns among researchers and educators who are critically engaging with the role of academia within broader systems of power [Abdulla in 23, 24]. Listening, understood as

an ethical and epistemic orientation, entails reflexivity regarding one's own positionality within these arrangements and an openness to forms of knowledge that may resist translation into dominant design frameworks.

Reconsidering participation through placeness ultimately invites a broader reflection on the discipline's conditions of operation. The challenge ahead for Participatory Design Community is therefore not simply to expand participation, but to interrogate the infrastructures that organise it. In this light, PDC Places can be understood as a situated inquiry into how this field might be reconfigured in response to ongoing struggles over knowledge, power, and territory.

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