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# Imaginarities for Sharing and Repair Practices

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## Abstract

The situated action explores how participatory formats can democratize the process of creating future visions with a focus on circular consumption practices. Through an interactive and generative exhibition during the PDC26 in Milan, the communities present at the time and place, including conference attendees, persons affiliated with the campus and the public, is invited to create social practice imaginaries – visions in which sharing and repairing as everyday practices are the norm. Contributions can be made continuously, with participants adding their visions to a growing collective canvas using various materials and hands-on reflection. This situated action builds on the themes of the conference, which focus on facilitating dialogue around sustainable transitions through collaborative decision-making and the development of systemic interventions. In addition to finding visions for the future of circular practices, it reflects on the methodology: What levers are needed to move from participation to action? How can participatory formats democratize future-making and ensure lasting impact? Who can critically design the future?

## CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Interaction design; • Interaction design process and methods; • Participatory design;

## Keywords

social practice imaginaries, sharing, repair

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## 1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of this situated action is to provoke thought about circular consumption practices [1] and the ways to use participatory methods to engage citizens in developing alternative futures in this space. It is crucial to create alternative societal visions in this space to maintain good and just living conditions on the whole planet. In light of fostering circularity this can mean reflecting on how we *possess possessions* – and beyond, and therefore the situated action will specifically address the practices of repair and sharing.

In this sense, the practices of sharing and repairing position themselves against the predominant throwaway mentality in many societies. Sharing things means having temporary access to an object of need or using something without owning it individually. Repairing means putting an existing item that is damaged, broken, worn, or not working correctly back into a usable condition, thus avoiding the need to replace it. Beyond self-guided sharing or repair, urban environments already offer numerous supported initiatives (such as Repair Cafés, online sharing platforms, local networks, and commercial repair services). Yet one of the key challenges lies in routinization: integrating these practices into everyday habits. Achieving this requires a deeper, more fundamental shift in how we relate to the objects we own and use.

In the European context, many cities, communes, and regions are already working towards making sharing and repairing practices more accessible and frequent in their urban environments, for example by supporting local initiatives and researching new concepts (examples: INTERREG Europe Good Cities: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-cities>, ShaRepair Practices: <https://sharerepairpractices.nl>). As such projects acknowledge, embedding sharing and repairing in urban life requires the active involvement and inclusion of affected stakeholders.

This is well reflected in the ideas of participatory design. The field's historical ideals of workplace democracy have long expanded to include democratization of everyday life and public sphere. Even back then, participatory design researchers were advocating for alternative and pluralistic perspectives on participation and democratization [2]. However, co-design workshops are often the medium of choice in most project setups, and while they offer good opportunities for collaboration, they represent just one possible mode of engagement. Enriching a process with other formats can make participation more democratic by enabling involvement from people who might not choose or be able to attend face-to-face sessions [3]. This is important, as our interactions span broader landscapes, the interventions we design must also reflect the broader spectrum of experiences. And yet this is challenging: We are part of larger systems where decisions are often made far from those affected, making people feel unheard.

Thus, creating touchpoints beyond formalized workshops can add significant value by reaching a wider group of affected people and inviting them to contribute. Such invitations help democratize and energize socio-technical transformation processes. When individuals begin shaping their own small-scale changes, these personal transformations can accumulate, generating momentum for broader, grassroots change.

Building on this perspective, Huttunen et al. [4] emphasize the importance of engaging citizens in transition research through creative, participatory methods and describe furthermore the creation



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of future visions as a relevant approach. Future-making refers to the process of imagining and shaping possible futures and working actively and collaboratively towards desired outcomes. In considering practices, social practice imaginaries acknowledge that social practices are shaped by, and in turn shape, materiality. Social practice imaginaries are visions of possible futures around everyday practices [5].

Therefore, this situated action explores how communities can shape future practices by facilitating spontaneous, low-threshold moments of participation. It is essential to engage communities through participatory formats to complement decision-making in higher governance structures and democratize the process of shaping the future. This will enable us to co-create alternative future scenarios and we can use the participatory process itself as a form of intervention. This means reflection, empowerment and demonstrating to people that change is possible. Policies can offer direction, but to achieve societal uptake, we need to engage and create momentum in the communities we hope to change.

## 2 Format

Embedded in the setting of the PDC26 in Milan, the situated action will take the form of an interactive exhibition which will be located on the university campus and be open to all passers-by – conference attendees, persons affiliated with the campus and the public. Therefore, the campus setting offers an opportunity to engage with both the local Milanese community as well as an international public coming from the conference and the wider university environment. Each person brings their own knowledge and experiences allowing for multiple interpretations, which is wanted for this format. The situated action invites visitors to collaboratively create social practice imaginaries where sharing and repairing are everyday practices. Participants can contribute at any time, adding their visions to a growing collective canvas. Over time, as contributions accumulate, a unique snapshot emerges shaped by the diverse communities present. In addition, the author will be present and facilitate the situated action within defined time slots of the conference program.

The situated action pursues two goals – one focused on the substantive content and its community relevance, and one on the meta-level reflection of the methodology itself: Through reflective prompts, such as What would a society look like where sharing and repairing are the norm? Can repair elevate an object? Does sharing offer unexpected benefits? What democratic alternatives to consumption could we imagine?, the installation encourages reflection on the social norms and values embedded in our consumption practices. It also challenges deeper assumptions, asking: Do technologies break more than they fix? To ground these reflections in experience, the installation includes materials that invite small acts of participation. Visitors may perform a simple repair or share an object with another attendee during the time of the installation to spark deeper reflection on the topic at hand.

Moreover, the situated action explores social practice imaginaries as a participatory method for envisioning futures. The methodological reflection ranges from practical considerations such as timing, set-up and location to questions about how participation can lead to concrete actions and changes in practices and attitudes,

and finally to an examination of the designer's role in (not) facilitating this process. It asks, for instance: What levers are needed to move from participation to action? How can participatory formats democratize future-making and ensure lasting impact? Who can critically design futures? and What role do designers play in initiating participatory processes?

## 3 Relation to Conference Themes

Aligned with the PDC 2026 theme, the situated action opens a dialogue on participatory decision-making across scales – from local communities to broader governance systems. It addresses the social, technical, and political dimensions of sustainable transitions: The format invites visitors to reflect on consumption, repair, and sharing practices and contribute ideas for future scenarios. Through low-threshold engagement, the installation intends to explore how collective future-making can be democratic and inclusive when diverse voices come together. It aims to counter the inertia often felt around initiating change, demonstrating that participation can be simple, meaningful, and enjoyable.

## 4 Outcome and Dissemination

The situated action is intended to create meaning in several ways. An immediate take-away is that visitors of the situated action leave with positive experiences, motivation, and ideas to share within their own communities and networks. The insights gathered through the situated action can inform the development and communication of imaginaries for sharing and repair practices. This can support subsequent participatory activities within and beyond the communities encountered in Milan. Disseminating the project will also involve refining the participation format to make it adaptable to different contexts.

Furthermore, this situated action will provide data for the researcher's doctoral project. The outcomes of the situated action will be summarized and published, specifically within the ShaRepair Practices project (<https://sharepairpractices.nl>). This project explores how sharing and repair practices can reshape urban life and reduce our environmental footprint using social practice theory – an analytical framework to explain how practices are shaped by meanings, skills, and materials, and how they connect to broader socio-technical systems [6]. The ShaRepair Practices project focuses on the Netherlands, particularly the Amsterdam region and cities in the Gelderland province. The work package in which the researcher is engaged focuses on co-designing circular consumption practices with citizens.

## 5 Author

Julia Knabe is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at TU Delft. Her work is focused on how design interventions for sharing and repair practices can be co-created.

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