

P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN

GUT FEELINGS: AN EDIBLE EXPLORATION OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN LANGUAGE.

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GLOSSARY**

ABSTRACT | Grounded in Participatory Design (PD)’s evolving embrace of relational and processual approaches (Huybrechts et al., 2022; Huybrechts & Teli, 2020; Pihkala & Karasti, 2022), this session explores the intersection between bodily experiences, particularly related to eating and digestion, and the language we use in PD. The specificity, situatedness, materiality, relationality, and transformation capacity already embedded in eating make it a rich and provocative field for researchers and designers to engage with. The focus of this session is on how the acts of cooking, eating, and digesting together can inform and shape new terms and concepts—and, by extension, new practices—within the realm of PD. By incorporating the insights from philosopher Boris Groys (2022), anthropologist Annemarie Mol (2008, 2021), and sociologist Elspeth Probyn (2004, 2015), we aim to craft a collection of meanings that reflects the interplay between personal satisfaction, communal experiences, and the materiality of our designerly actions.

Exploring bodily experiences and their intersection with language is critical to “thicken” (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000) our understanding and approach to Participatory Design. Sensitivities are born through the act of naming; “we cannot perceive that which has no name” (Sekiguchi, 2023). Therefore, we aim to develop a sensory-rich glossary, a collection of word meanings that captures the nuances and subtleties of our experiences when we dare think and feel with our guts (Escobar, 2016). The format of the session will be divided into three acts, as follows :

1. Creating a setting to challenge what a “conference lunch” is. And its hygienic, formal, ready-to-eat format. We will devise a space for in-digestion as the moment to gain awareness of the diversity of bodies, positions and biases participating, bending ourselves and PD notions to allow the gut—instead of our brain—to step in.
2. Participants will engage in a shared cooking experience set up as a reflective platform to digest the embodied aspects of PD. It will be a very interactive moment for collectively smashing, massaging, crushing, peeling, cutting and squishing materials and meanings.
3. A communal meal. When eating, participants will be encouraged to reflect on how their senses are expanding their understanding of PD during the session. By actively listening to our gut, we will give shape to our Gut Feelings glossary: a sensory-rich collection of meaning, coining new expressions and redefining existing ones based on the many forms of digestion explored during the session.

For tools and infrastructure, a space with a round table, essential cooking tools, and ingredients for the planned meal. Additionally, participants may bring utensils or ingredients to contribute to the collective experience if we can contact them before the session.

Exploring the connection between the gut and brain in Participatory Design could potentially lead to more embodied and holistic approaches, considering the messy and complex nature of human experiences and interactions (Braidotti et al., 2018; Haraway, 2016). This experimental format promises an engaging, social, and cooperative environment, fostering a deep exploration of our guts and digestion processes as mediums to access embodied knowledge and its integration into the language of Participatory Design.

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