

ICS Seminar Series

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

From Products to Publics: Young People, Participation and Online Campaigns for Safety and Wellbeing

Dr Teresa Swirski and Dr Philippa Collin

Date

Thursday 2 October

Time

11.30am – 1pm

Venue

EB.2.21 Parramatta
(South) Campus

Abstract

This presentation considers how ‘participation’ is configured in the context of increasingly complex systems of socio-cultural digital communication, policy imperatives, public concerns, and a plethora of programs and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people. Specifically we examine the potential of participatory design (PD) as a methodology for intervening in (adult-centric) dominant discourses of youth, participation and safety. Drawing on the concept of ‘infrastructuring’ (Le Dantec & DiSalvo, 2013), we explore underlying processes that enable or inhibit the ability of PD projects to move beyond an emphasis on the production of ‘products’ to shaping ‘publics’. To frame our discussion we draw on two examples of campaigns developed as part of a diverse, multi-year project examining the role of online social marketing campaigns to promote young people’s safety and wellbeing. From these examples we discuss the ways PD promotes a focus on the role of creativity, context and connectivity in processes of infrastructuring and shaping publics. While not free of the dynamics of existing power relations, we argue that PD enables an exploration of the *present* socio-material networks and practices of young people in ways that can richly inform engaged research and enhance the possibilities of promoting safety and wellbeing.

Biographies

Teresa Swirski is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society. She is part of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre’s Safe and Well Online project investigating social communications in the promotion of young people’s safety and wellbeing. Her research interests span participation, power, complexity, and wellbeing in relation to young people’s digital practices. Teresa’s doctoral thesis explored the intersections between creativity, learning and culture from a social-ecological perspective.

Philippa Collin is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society and a Research Program Leader in the Young and Well CRC. Prior to joining UWS she worked in the NGO sector where her interests in engaged research in youth participation, the socio-political dimensions of young people’s technology use and the role of digital media for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing were cultivated. Her current funded research projects investigate political participation and network governance, knowledge brokering and translation and the role of digital media for youth wellbeing, participation and citizenship.