Can Technologies be Feminist?

How and why to design like a feminist
*Zoom housekeeping*

- Please make yourself comfortable
- Please feel at home 🏡
- Knit 🧶
- Walk 🚶
- Take breaks 🚽

- **Obs:** my part of the talk will be recorded, so put on/off camera as you feel like.
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AHO The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway

2018-2020 Postdoctoral Researcher
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2015-2018 Ph.D. in Interaction Design
Aarhus University, Denmark

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(she/her)
Can Technologies be Feminist?
Can Technologies be Feminist? YES!
Can Technologies be Feminist?

How and why to design like a feminist
this talk:

What is feminism in design and HCI? Why is it important?

A case for femtech: Menstrual and sexual health technologies

Examples from my own design practice

The feminist practice of “troubling"

Conversations on feminism(s) in design and HCI
Feminism in Design and HCI
Feminism in Design and HCI

Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of feminism:
"belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests"
Feminism in Design and HCI

Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of feminism: “belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests”
Intersectional feminism

“Many years ago, I began to use the term “intersectionality” to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice”.
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, The urgency of intersectionality, 2016
Feminism in Design and HCI

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“we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.”
- Combahee River Collective statement (1977)
Feminism in Design and HCI

‘Feminist HCI’ by Shaowen Bardzell, 2010
- pluralism
- participation
- advocacy
- ecology
- embodiment
- self-disclosure/reflexivity
Feminism in Design and HCI

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- pluralism
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Feminisms-through-design by Sai Shruthi Chivukula, 2020
- willfullness
- queerness
- failure
Feminism in Design and HCI

Feminist Future(s), Alexis Hope MIT
“There are many possible feminist futures, but we believe a future that is feminist will be—at its core—an intersectional future where all people thrive, liberated from oppression based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, citizenship status, and more.”
Data Feminism’s seven principle
1. Examine power
2. Challenge power
3. Elevate emotions and embodiment
4. Rethink binaries and hierarchies
5. Embrace pluralism
6. Consider context
7. Make labour visible

What makes a project feminist?
“a project may be feminist in content, in that it challenges power by choice of subject matter; in form, in that it challenges power by shifting the aesthetic and/or sensory registers of data communication; and/or in process, in that it challenges power by building participatory, inclusive processes of knowledge production.”

Data Feminism (2020)
Catherine D’Ignazio & Lauren Klein
“With 50% of the global population as target customers and a market potential of $50 billion by 2025, Femtech is hailed as the next big phenomenon in the women’s health market”

-Frost & Sullivan, 2018
Apple Study Affirms That Women Do in Fact Have Cramps During Their Periods dlvr.it/RvH65v
If you press your lock button five times in a row your iPhone emits a loud siren, counts down to 3, then calls emergency services AND sends a text to your emergency contacts alerting them of the situation and your location.

Search 'Emergency SOS' in your phone to set it up 🇦🇺

Please feel safe as I feel this is a little known fact that could make us all feel safer 💚
Thread

Naomi Wu 机械妖姬 @RealSexyCyborg · Sep 4, 2020

Pregnancy tests are 99% accurate in the lab, 75% accurate in the wild due to misreads - mistakes which are highly dependent on education and socioeconomic status. No, it is not stupid or wasteful to use a hardware interface to help women with this.

archive.is/20081206110632...

foone @Foone · Sep 4, 2020

I saw a tweet recently that I wanted to confirm. Sadly I can't find it right now, but it was about digital pregnancy tests. So, I went out and grabbed a 2-pack for 7 dollars: let's tear it down!

Show this thread
IN HER WORDS

Hey, Alexa, Are You Sexist?

“Add milk to the grocery list.” “Switch off the lights.” It’s no coincidence that our robotic helpers at home have feminine voices.

Yolande Strengers Amazon Echo’s Alexa is programmed to always apologize – especially when it’s not her fault

What is Alexa sorry for? The device’s glitches or a poorly designed skill? Amazon’s treatment of its workers? The coronavirus pandemic? Being female?
A design journal from 2015-2021
2015-2016

PeriodShare

Marcelle
2017–2018
Curious Cycles

Bodily fluids for utopian fabulations

Menarche Bits

2019-2021
And diving into two current projects that are zooming in and zooming out on menstrual health
#1 Menarche Bits


Intimate Touch


Intimate touch is a willful push away from our field’s norms of understanding the body as abstracted data.

Through an embodied design workshop, we explored materials and interactions that could speak to experiences of menstruation. We started by following a Peircean notion on touching and feeling the big issues, to seance our relation to this everyday area of the body. We were then inspired to design a “Lilting garland” that features an attached thread inhabited by a series of simple, non-negative, and pleasurable circular (spatial) body movements.

In the embedded design workshop, we also made future-proof pads fitted with a ring, which can be heated in a microwave oven. The pads are to be placed on parts of the body that might be painful. The ring can be moved around within the pad, by the wearer as a significant other. We later included these “brushes” in the Menstrual Bits kit.

Menstrual Bits is an open-ended prototyping kit to support the creation of wearable, shape-changing technologies for young menstruators. The kit has soft silicone shapes in different sizes and colors that touch the body. The shapes can be worn directly on the skin or attached to garments. They can be inflated and deflated with an electrical pump, and respond to the wearer’s pressure. The air chambers are controlled sequentially by a series of bidirectional logic feedback.

#2 Bodily fluids for utopian fabulations
“Air pollution can influence women’s reproductive health, specifically menstrual cycle characteristics, oocyte quality, and risk of miscarriage. Specifically by the toxicants released by fossil fuel combustion PM10 and SO2.”

“A common type of bog moss found throughout medieval England, sphagnum cymbilolium, is remarkably absorbent. It was used as stuffing for menstrual pads, as toilet paper, and as a battlefield dressing for wartime wounds. The popular name for this moss is blood moss.”

Scaling Bodily Fluids for Utopian Fabulations.
Ongoing work and under review.

@ Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard, Nadia Camp Woytuk, and Karey Helms. 2021.
Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard
ALICE Aarhus University
jigsaw puzzle

0.4052298216819763

wool, woolen, woollen

0.22817166149616241
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Can Technologies be Feminist?
How and why to design like a feminist

🌍 Designing from where? Bring one’s own positionally and lived experience into design.

🔥 Designing with what? Use your body and its materiality and entanglement with tech and the environment.

👫 Designing for/with who? Invite socially marginalized people, communities and non-human agents into your practice.

😆 Designing for what? Use your design to rewrite the past, question the present, and radically reimagine the future.
some of my writings:


Check out for more on feminism in HCI and design:

Gopinaath Kannabiran — “Your sexuality does not matter!” & “Ignored intersections” (2021)
Kristina Höök — “The day I am a researcher---: not my gender” (2019)
Ann Light — HCI as heterodoxy: Technologies of identity and the queering of interaction with computers (2011)
Shaowen Bardzell — “Feminist HCI: taking stock and outlining an agenda for design” (2010)
Sai Shruthi Chivukula — Feminisms-through-design (2020)
Catherine D’Ignazio & Lauren Klein — Data Feminism (2020)
Kimberlé Crenshaw — The urgency of intersectionality https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOeS-UsQ2o