

## **Who decides who participates? Re-thinking the epistemology of participation**

By Gabriella Giannachi

This paper analyses salient debates in the history of critical thinking related to participatory practices in a number of disciplines and fields, including art, theatre, development, architecture, broadcasting and science. Participation, the author maintains, is not only a form of empowerment and knowledge generation, identity and community creation, it is also a type of economy which facilitates self-production, privileges social connection (or relationships) over consumption or possibly turns social connection in a new form of consumption. The paper, after surveying a fascinating field of practices, concludes by presenting initial findings from the Cartography project, developed by experts in performance and new media and computer science at the Universities of Exeter and Nottingham and Tate.