

This thesis reports from a series of co-design experiments, which, under the heading of the Network Lab, explores new formats for dialogue and exchange among cultural workers, librarians, managers, and citizens in cultural institutions and neighbourhoods in the municipality of Copenhagen. Drawing on the concept of the Co-design Lab, and on the work of philosopher of science Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and his conceptual framework for analysing experimental research practises in the life sciences, the thesis sets out to position an experimental co-design practise on the borders of constructive design research and constructivist social research. The thesis accounts for how, in a network of carefully staged events, co-design tools and methods were employed to investigate new institutional platforms, local political procedures, alternative images of cultural collectives and citizens, and new possible collaborations between institutionalized and non-institutionalized networks.

The thesis points to the design-anthropological experimental set-up of the Network Lab as a particular platform, which organises and reshuffles both different representational techniques and temporalities into spaces for collective proposal making and negotiation among members of a research collective. By focusing on research activities as a network of events, always forged but never fully controlled by the researcher, the thesis explores the critical role of methodology in research. It exposes how co-design tools and methods offer a way into an experimental engagement with the social. The account shows how the repetitive and committed work of producing a network of events, takes off from a practise rather than from conceptual and theoretical orders, and how such a practise holds the potentiality of the unknown and possible together. At the same time, the continual exploration of that same practise is a prerequisite for building a potent research machine. By juxtaposing the network with the lab the experimental research device presented in this thesis works to strike a balance between change as a phenomenon that unfolds in always already emerging networks, and change as local forms of situated difference and displacement, which cannot only be grasped within the lab, but are completely dependent on the local forging and configuration of the lab to materialise and become visible.