Dissent by Design:
A Manifesto for CHI Manifestos

Julian Hanna
Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute
Caminho da Penteada, 9020-105 Funchal
julian.hanna@m-iti.org

Sónia Matos
Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute
Caminho da Penteada, 9020-105 Funchal
sonia.matos@m-iti.org

Ricardo Rodrigues
Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute
Caminho da Penteada, 9020-105 Funchal
ricardojoaofreitas@gmail.com

Simone Ashby
Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute /
University of Madeira
Caminho da Penteada, 9020-105 Funchal
simone.ashby@m-iti.org

Alexis Faria
Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute /
University of Madeira
Caminho da Penteada, 9020-105 Funchal
alex.faria@m-iti.org

KEYWORDS

Dissent by design; HCI; manifesto; authoring tools; critical theory; avant-garde

ABSTRACT

The past decade has seen a welcome rise in critical reflection in HCI [29,13,3,19,20,21]. But the use of manifestos - not to promote but to provoke - is still rare in comparison to more established disciplines. Digital activism has given new life to the manifesto, and the manifesto may in turn give new life to CHI - prompting new ideas by temporarily liberating scholars from the confines of careful speech and rational argument. We present a manifesto for manifestos; a chance for the CHI community to question its status quo and dream of its possible futures using our purpose-built authoring tools.

Listen!
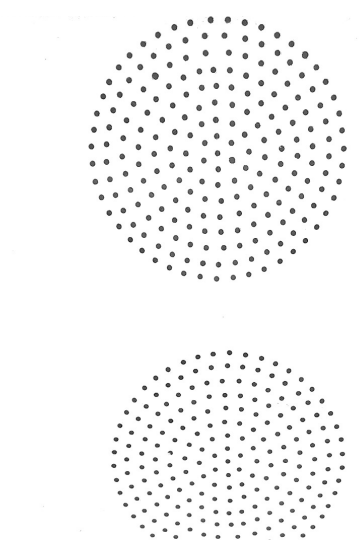
1 PREAMBLE.

MANIFESTOS are being written in areas adjacent to HCI [8], but rarely in a way that is critical and creative - as avant-garde manifestos are meant to be - rather than reactionary [6] or merely programmatic (with some exceptions [10,24]). In terms of mainstream CHI papers, even the most critically engaged tend to use "the master's tools" as they undertake the bold tasks of raising the critical bar, diversifying the field and scope of HCI, and "democratizing from within" (e.g. [23,25,2,3]). As a result, evidence of true systemic change has been slow to manifest.

So much has changed in recent years - months, days even. As a community we need to have a frank conversation about who we are, what we are for, how we want to change, and where we want to go next. Writing manifestos can help us get this conversation started.

DIGITAL ACTIVISM HAS GIVEN NEW LIFE TO THE MANIFESTO. THE MANIFESTO CAN GIVE NEW LIFE TO CHI.

WE ON THE PERIPHERY WANT OUR VOICES TO BE HEARD.
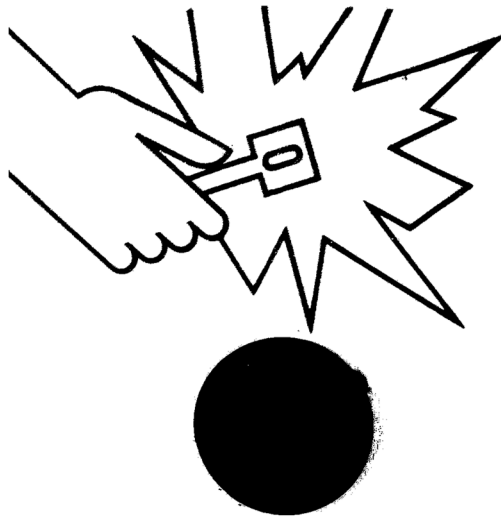
2 FORM.

HCI NEEDS THE MANIFESTO, "the mode of agonism, the voice of those who are contra" [28], to articulate ideas for change in a public, accessible form - just as the manifesto, which as a genre is constantly evolving and adapting, needs HCI. The revolutionary manifesto has returned to prominence in the digital age, especially after the successive ruptures of the 2008 financial crisis, the 2016 US presidential election, and the spread of grassroots movements from Occupy to Black Lives Matter to #MeToo and the Yellow Vests. This return might herald either a positive shift towards political engagement or a toxic slide into destructive upheaval and polarisation, or both. But the power of the manifesto cannot be ignored. How can manifestos help the CHI community shape its future? How can they serve, in the words of Bruno Latour, "Not as a war cry ... but rather as a warning, a call to attention" [17]?

The avant-garde manifesto is a *Through the Looking-Glass* reflection of the common political manifesto. It blends revolutionary zeal, dramatic performance and an insatiable thirst for novelty; its raison d'etre is to disrupt and challenge the status quo, to overturn received opinions. Pioneered in the early 20th century by the Futurist leader F. T. Marinetti, who called himself the "caffeine of Europe", the avant-garde manifesto channeled the anarchic energy of the new century into a form that was clear and contemporary, strong and direct. While we do not need Marinetti's rah-rah techno-futurism (we already have it) or his quasi-fascism (also on the rise), the manifesto's utility for disruption remains a tonic to stagnation in any discipline, whether Art, Design, Architecture, or HCI.

Manifestos are refreshingly biased. They bear no false claims to objectivity. Neutrality is antithetical to the manifesto, which is not only polemical, but (following avant-garde tradition) often proudly unreasonable as well. Manifestos introduce new ways of thinking - sometimes in strange and extreme packages like the *SCUM Manifesto* or even *The Communist Manifesto*. Manifestos make visible, they bring urgent causes to light - which is why they seem so timely in our age of social upheaval. Do manifestos bring about change? Yes: by presenting alternative visions and outlining concrete actions. By making it clear that the status quo is insufferable, intolerable, ridiculous.

Today we are all fluent in the language of manifestos. Our writing is concise, confident, arrogant. We throw out statements to an unseen and potentially limitless public. We aim to provoke sharp, immediate reactions that will be rewarded quantifiably with likes and retweets. We court engagement through witty aphorisms, calculated emotional appeals, and striking visual images. We already know how to write manifestos. And what can manifestos do for us? Manifesto writing can prompt new ideas by liberating us from the confines of careful speech and rational argument - because we don't know what we stand for until we try to put our thoughts and beliefs into concise and convincing words.

MANIFESTOS ARE THE FIRST STOP FOR VISIONARIES.

CAUTION WILL GET US NOWHERE!
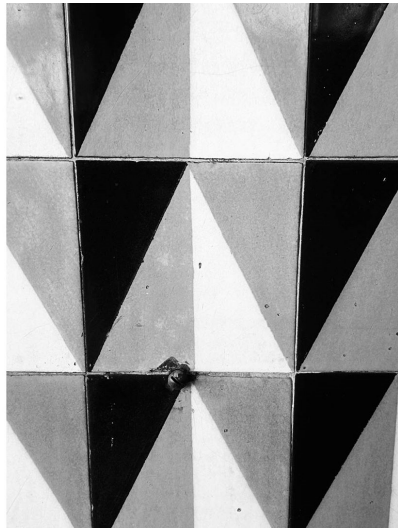
3 ANTECEDENTS.

TO DATE WE HAVE WITNESSED a proliferation of post-positivist approaches to HCI research and practice. This is visible in research agendas that value reflection [29], humanistic enquiry [1], as well as postcolonial [15], feminist [3] and queer [19] theories, to name a few. Such ventures mark the emergence of critical and emancipatory reflection and practice that imbue the design and conceptualisation of technology with new meanings that go beyond the early canons of control and predictability that marked the birth of the field. A post-positivist agenda is equally tied to the application of new socially engaged methods, "encouraging debate around societal issues" [5]. More recently, the field has witnessed the adoption of "design strategies of troubling, friction, queering, and contestation that aim to question the status quo" [12]. alt.chi itself - "the avant-garde of CHI" - has often been the stage for rebellious interventions, including manifestos, that attempt to disrupt the discipline from within [24].

These radical voices have been published in CHI's proceedings. But what has really changed? alt.chi remains a sideshow. The structure is largely undisturbed. HCI is on autopilot. We still publish so as not to perish.
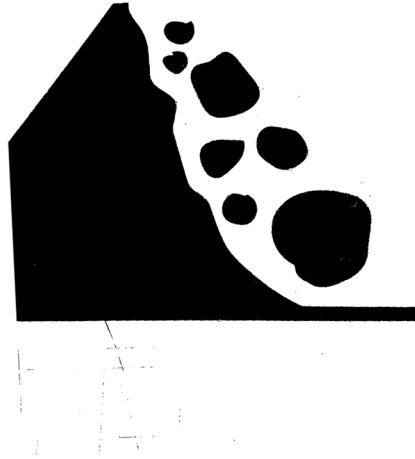
We fear for our livelihoods, work when we should be playing. We fret over smart toothbrushes while ignoring global environmental collapse. Do we even read what we cite [27]?

These are some of the voices we must read, and hear, and take further if we are to survive and thrive in the coming decade.

"IF WE ARE LIVING IN A POST-TRUTH TIME,
WE SHOULD FOCUS ON TRYING TO MAKE
PROGRESSIVE ARGUMENTS AND FACTS
MORE LEGIBLE AND ENGAGING
TO A WIDE AND DIVERSE AUDIENCE" [14].

"CHI IN PARTICULAR IS A TOOL THAT SERVES TO REINFORCE
THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL STATUS QUO, FAVOURING
SELL-OUT RESEARCHERS WIELDING ARCANE VERBIAGE AND P-VALUES,
ALL PAID FOR BY CORPORATE AND GOVERNMENT INTERESTS THAT REWARD
THE BUILDING OF SYSTEMS THAT DISTRACT, SUBDUE AND SUBJUGATE...
WE ENCOURAGE RESEARCH MOTIVATED BY PASSION
AND DISSENT OVER PATENTS" [24].

"BLASPHEMY IS NOT APOSTASY... IRONY IS ABOUT HUMOR AND SERIOUS PLAY.
IT IS ALSO A RHETORICAL STRATEGY AND A POLITICAL METHOD" [11].

"SELF-REFLEXIVITY IS IMPORTANT.
WE ARE NOT BEING SELF-INDULGENT OR METHODOLOGICALLY FLAWED
IN WRITING OURSELVES INTO THE ACCOUNT OF OUR CHANGE-MAKING:
WE ARE BEING CONSISTENT WITH WHAT ACTION RESEARCH REQUIRES OF US.
NOTING OUR STARTING POINTS, OUR LIMITATIONS, AND OUR PRIORITIES
IS BOTH GOOD RESEARCH AND NECESSARY POLITICAL CANDOR.
WE MAKE JUDGMENTS ALL THE TIME
AND NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THE POSITION
FROM WHICH WE DO SO" [20].
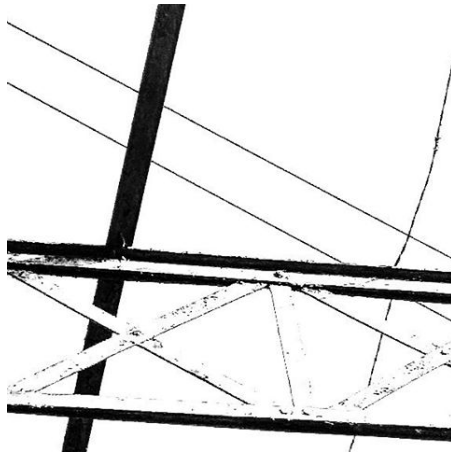
"PLACING FEMINISM AND HCI INTO A DIALOGUE IS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL
TO BOTH DISCIPLINES, AS HCI AND PSYCHOLOGY, HCI AND SOCIOLOGY,
AND HCI AND DESIGN HAVE ALL LIKEWISE ENJOYED TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIPS" [3].

▬

"A MANIFESTO MIGHT NOT BE SO USELESS AT THIS POINT, MAKING EXPLICIT
(THAT IS, MANIFEST) A SUBTLE BUT RADICAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE DEFINITION OF WHAT IT
MEANS TO PROGRESS, THAT IS, TO PROCESS FORWARD
AND MEET NEW PROSPECTS.
NOT AS A WAR CRY FOR AN AVANT-GARDE
TO MOVE EVEN FURTHER AND FASTER AHEAD,
BUT RATHER AS A WARNING, A CALL TO ATTENTION,
SO AS TO STOP GOING FURTHER IN THE SAME WAY
AS BEFORE TOWARD THE FUTURE" [17].

▬

"A METHODOLOGICAL BLIND SPOT HAS MADE IT HARD FOR HCI
TO PURSUE TECHNICAL AND SOCIOPOLITICAL AGENDAS SIMULTANEOUSLY:
COMMON METHODOLOGICAL STANCES TEND TO PRIORITIZE
EITHER THE POSSIBILITIES OF TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS
OR CAREFUL SOCIOPOLITICAL CRITIQUE -
BUT NOT BOTH EQUALLY AND AT THE SAME TIME" [23].

▬

"THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN FORGED IN THE CRUCIBLES OF DIFFERENCE – THOSE OF US WHO
ARE POOR, WHO ARE LESBIANS, WHO ARE BLACK, WHO ARE OLDER –
KNOW THAT SURVIVAL IS NOT AN ACADEMIC SKILL.
IT IS LEARNING HOW TO TAKE OUR DIFFERENCES AND MAKE THEM STRENGTHS. FOR THE MASTER'S
TOOLS WILL NEVER DISMANTLE THE MASTER'S HOUSE.
THEY MAY ALLOW US TEMPORARILY TO BEAT HIM AT HIS OWN GAME,
BUT THEY WILL NEVER ENABLE US TO BRING ABOUT GENUINE CHANGE" [25].

▬

"IN CHI PAPERS, CITATION OF PREVIOUS WORK IS TYPICALLY
A SHALLOW, THROWAWAY ACTION THAT DEMONSTRATES
LITTLE CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORK CITED...
IN 43% OF CHI PAPERS SAMPLED, WE FOUND
NO EVIDENCE OF ANY CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT" [27].

r   t   :   u   w   e

f   g   h

c   v   a   s

7   8   i   3   4

d   e   r

j   k

x   d

t   5   h   ⬆

f   c   b   ?123
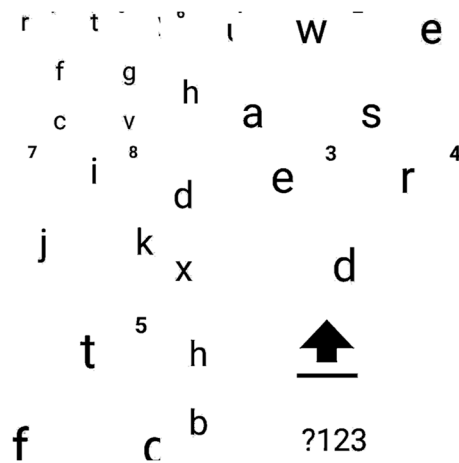
"'HUMAN' IS TOO RICH, TOO DIVERSE, AND TOO COMPLEX A CATEGORY
TO BEAR A UNIVERSAL SOLUTION" [2].

"YOU CANNOT BUY THE REVOLUTION.
YOU CANNOT MAKE THE REVOLUTION.
YOU CAN ONLY BE THE REVOLUTION" [18].

4   PROVOCATIONS.

i.	Embrace protest.
ii.	Find your voice. Use it.
iii.	F*** paywalls. Open research.
iv.	Throw out sadistic templates.
v.	Stop ring-fencing original thought.
vi.	Resist passivity and automation.
vii.	Challenge idol worship.
viii.	Make writing clear and accessible.
ix.	Abolish institutional hegemony.
x.	Integrate theory and practice.
xi.	Design tools and interactions people need.
xii.	Be honest about your motivations.
xiii.	Abandon the myth of universalism.
xiv.	Make new tools.
xv.	Question / reinvent user studies, peer review, conference fees … the whole system from the bottom to the top.

5 CALL TO ACTION.

Manifestos have long been associated with advertising. Just as manifestos act as advertisements for change, every academic presentation is an advertisement for a subsequent conversation. But how many of us ever get that far? The mark of a successful academic gathering is the sustained engagement and discussion that continues long after the closing session. And yet, for key event takeaways and action planning to have resonance and lasting impact, we need a means of amplifying and building on our shared ideas and sense of purpose.

Our aim of bringing manifesto writing to HCI corresponds with the aim of the manifesto itself, which "exist[s] to challenge and provoke" [9]. Akin to Critical or Speculative Design, we seek not to solve a problem directly but to offer it up for public debate, encouraging reflection and critique [4,7,22,26]. In the words of Laboria Cuboniks, the collective behind The Xenofeminist Manifesto: "The whole point of writing something like [a manifesto] is to reshape the discursive chessboard" [16].

How can technology aid human expression without diminishing it? How can a manifesto writing tool support authorial agency without over-automating? While we are designing tools or "machines" for making manifestos, our purpose extends beyond simple technical facilitation and what Dunne and Raby call "design's inbuilt optimism" [7]. We want to encourage users to reflect - through collaboration, conscious expression, and public dissemination - on what they stand for and why.

We will perform - nay, declaim! - our manifesto as it was done in the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. We will shout it from the rooftops and encourage uproarious debate that spills over into the cafes and bars of Byres Road, infecting everything with the spirit of creative destruction and Phoenix-like rebirth.

Participants will craft and share their ideas using our Manifesto Machine and Moving Type Machine via the Words in Freedom hub. They will create manifestos in the tradition of the Futurists, Dadaists, and Vorticists using kinetic typography, bold colours, and electrifying fonts. Together we will light fires across the mental landscape of this Caledonian metropolis - until a bonfire of inspiration rages all the way to the Necropolis, causing its very inhabitants to rise and dance a merry jig of celebration.

<div align="right">

COME DELEGATES, JOIN US!
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR TEMPLATES, AND A WORLD TO WIN!

</div>

https://www.wordsinfreedomproject.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

[1] Jeffrey Bardzell, Shaowen Bardzell, Carl DiSalvo William Gaver and Phoebe Sengers. 2012. The Humanities and/in HCI. In *Proceedings of CHI '12 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1135-1138. DOI: 10.1145/2212776.2212405.

[2] Shaowen Bardzell. 2010. Feminist HCI: Taking Stock and Outlining an Agenda for Design. In *Proceedings of CHI '10 SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1301-1310. DOI: 10.1145/1753326.1753521.

[3] Shaowen Bardzell and Jeffrey Bardzell. 2011. Towards a Feminist HCI Methodology: Social Science, Feminism, and HCI. In *Proceedings of CHI '11 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 675-684. DOI: 10.1145/1978942.1979041.

[4] Julian Bleecker. 2009. Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction. http://drbfw5wfjlxon.cloudfront.net/writing/DesignFiction_WebEdition.pdf

[5] Rachel Elizabeth Clarke, Jo Briggs, Ann Light, Sara Heitlinger and Clara Crivellaro. 2014. Socially Engaged Arts Practice in HCI. In *Proceedings of CHI '14 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 69-74. DOI: 10.1145/2559206.2559227.

[6] James Damore. 2017. Google's Ideological Echo Chamber. https://web.archive.org/web/20170809220001/diversitymemo-static.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/Googles-Ideological-Echo-Chamber.pdf

[7] Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby. 2013. *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, USA.

[8] Ester Fritch, Irina Shklovski and Rachel Douglas-Jones. 2018. Calling for a Revolution: An Analysis of IoT Manifestos. In *Proceedings of CHI '18 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA. DOI: 10.1145/3173574.3173876.

[9] Julian Hanna. 2014. Manifestos: A Manifesto. *The Atlantic* (24 June) https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/06/manifestos-a-manifesto-the-10-things-all-manifestos-need/372135/

[10] Julian Hanna, James Auger and Enrique Encinas. 2017. Reconstrained Design: A Manifesto. In *Proceedings of DIS '17 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 177-181. DOI: 10.1145/3064857.3079141.

[11] Donna J. Haraway. 2016. *Manifestly Haraway*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, USA and London, UK.

[12] Ellie Harmon, Matthias Korn, Ann Light and Amy Voida. 2016. Designing Against the Status Quo. In *Proceedings of DIS '16 Conference Companion Publication on Designing Interactive Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 65-68. DOI: 10.1145/2908805.2913020.

[13] Steve Harrison, Deborah Tatar and Phoebe Sengers. 2007. The Three Paradigms of HCI. In *Proceedings of CHI '07 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA.

[14] Garnet Hertz (Ed.). 2016. *Disobedient Electronics: Protest*. www.disobedientelectronics.com

[15] Lilly Irani, Janet Vertesi, Paul Dourish, Kavita Philip and Rebecca E. Grinter. 2010. Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development. In *Proceedings CHI '10 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1311-1320. DOI: 10.1145/1753326.1753522.

[16] Laboria Cuboniks. 2018. *The Xenofeminist Manifesto: A Politics for Alienation*. Verso, London, UK.

[17] Bruno Latour. 2010. An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'. *New Literary History*, 41, 471-490.

[18] Ursula K. Le Guin. 2002. *The Dispossessed*. Victor Gollancz, London, UK.

[19] Ann Light. 2011. HCI as Heterodoxy: Technologies of Identity and the Queering of Interaction with Computers. *Interacting with Computers*, 23, 430-438. DOI: 10.1016/j.intcom.2011.02.002.

[20] Ann Light, Chris Frauenberger, Jennifer Preece, Paul Strohmeier and Maria Angela Ferrario. 2017. Special Topic: Taking Action in a Changing World. *Interactions*, 25, 1, 34-45. DOI: 10.1145/3169128.

[21] Ann Light, Irina Shklovski and Alison Powell. 2017. Design for Existential Crisis. In *Proceedings of CHI EA '17 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 722-734. DOI: 10.1145/3027063.3052760.

[22] Joseph Lindley and Paul Coulton. 2015. Back to the Future: 10 Years of Design Fiction. In *Proceedings of the 2015 British HCI Conference*. ACM, Lincoln, UK, 210-211. DOI: 10.1145/2783446.2783592.

[23] Silvia Lindtner, Shaowen Bardzell and Jeffrey Bardzell. 2016. Reconstituting the Utopian Vision of Making: HCI After Technosolutionism. In *Proceedings of CHI '16 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1390-1402. DOI:10.1145/2858036.2858506.

[24] Conor Linehan and Ben Kirman. 2014. Never Mind the Bollocks, I Wanna Be AnarCHI: A Manifesto for Punk HCI. In *Proceedings of CHI '14 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 741-748. DOI: 10.1145/2559206.2578880.

[25] Audre Lorde, 2007. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA, USA.

[26] Matt Malpass. 2013. Between Wit and Reason: Defining Associative, Speculative, and Critical Design in Practice. *Design and Culture*, 5(3), 333-356.

[27] Joe Marshall, Conor Linehan, Jocelyn Spence and Stefan Rennick Egglestone. 2017. Throwaway Citation of Prior Work Creates Risk of Bad HCI Research. In *Proceedings of CHI '17 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 827-836. DOI: 10.1145/3027063.3052751.

[28] Marjorie Perloff. 2003. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*. Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL, USA.

[29] Phoebe Sengers, Kirsten Boehner, Shay David and Joseph 'Jofish' Kaye. 2005. Reflective Design. In *Proceedings of the 4th Decennial Conference on Critical Computing: Between Sense and Sensibility*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 49-58. DOI: 10.1145/1094562.1094569.

Commentary

For alt.chi paper
Dissent by Design: A Manifesto for CHI Manifestos
Callum Nash
Northumbria University
Sutherland Building
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE1 8ST
callumnash@northumbria.ac.uk

I   It is refreshing to see such a singular piece of writing coming out of Madeira's research lab. I agree wholeheartedly that there is rebellion in CHI, which I see as coming out of the realisation of how (particularly in the design of Human Computer Interfaces) we serve a political intent, whether or not we are aware of it. So, the idea of using the manifesto in crystallising our intent is extremely appealing.

One of the points I made in review was that Manifestos are normally produced *after* the movement has already started, as a means of creating some unified line amongst what is normally a disparate, unorganised mass of ideas. The step following this is then to build an organised movement that can pursue the goals stated in the manifesto. In real life, this is obviously not a linear, deterministic process, but this is roughly where the manifesto sits in terms of its historical function. We should temper our view of manifestos with the understanding that they are not always emancipatory in nature, they can be outright reactionary.

So we are talking about making manifestos now because we want to make coherent something that already exists in the CHI discussion, and it has been around for a long time; there have been emancipatory theoretical and practical movements within the genre of computer science for many years. Late cybernetics and the work of Stafford Beer being but one example (Beer, Stafford. "Cybernetics and 'the Will of the People.'" University of Manchester, 1991. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ybjOw6UJ8A.) I think it would be more accurate to say that the previous 'emancipatory' view of HCI (including technology generally) is at last crumbling under the weight of its contradiction, elsewhere, this theoretical continuity (of technology as politically positive) has been in rupture since the 1970s, and we are seeking to manifest a new continuity from this rupture (Moulfwad, Paul. *Continuity and Rupture.* Zero Books, 2016.) This could be described as a 'birth,' as it was in the draft of the paper I saw. But I think that's slight idealism, for movements to repurpose technology have been in existence for as long as the concept of technology itself; In Britain alone, the Luddites and the Arts and Crafts movement wanted to repurpose technology to produce common, rather than private property all the way back in the first days of Industrial Capitalism, before the common use of the word 'technology' itself.

So the manifesto does not give birth to a movement but are (at best) it's first, articulated words. They can be emancipatory, or reactionary, their meaning is contested and changes throughout history. Drafts of this paper characterised the Communist Manifesto as 'extreme' but to me this is a simply a canonical critique of our economy, and a statement of intent for the worker's movement, to which we have to thank for so much, even the idea of public education – which was at first considered extremist. Perhaps a better example of what is considered an extreme manifesto today would be the Quotations of Mao Tse-Tung, yet the aims of the authors, to render a fragmented movement into something systematic, was precisely the goal of the proletarian cultural revolution's use of the 'mass-line' and the 'Dazibao' (Laboratoire Urbanisme Insurrectionnel. "Chine | DAZIBAO." http://laboratoireurbanismeinsurrectionnel.blogspot.com/2012/09/chine-dazibao_19.html.) However, the tool with which the authors seek to systematise fragmented ideas, this 'manifesto generator' must justify itself as both a separate digital tool to the myriad digital surveillance platforms we are already trapped upon, and must be made accessible: I demand the source code. The paper leads us to a simple question; How can we manifest a movement from a manifesto? More importantly, how can we ensure that this movement defends itself so it can successfully prosecute a transformation?