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Contemporary computing technologies have thoroughly embedded themselves in every aspect of modern life_conducting commerce, maintaining and extending our networks of friends, and mobilizing political movements all occur through a growing collection of devices and services designed to keep and hold our attention. Yet what happens when our attention needs to be more local, collective, and focused on our immediate communities? Perhaps more important, how can we imagine and create new technologies with local communities? In Designing Publics, Christopher Le Dantec explores these questions by designing technologies with the urban homeless. Drawing on a case study of the design of a computational infrastructure in a shelter for homeless women and their children, Le Dantec theorizes an alternate vision of design in community contexts.

Focusing on collective action through design, Le Dantec investigates the way design can draw people together on social issues and create and sustain a public. By "designing publics" he refers both to the way publics arise out of design intervention and to the generative action publics take_how they "do design" as they mobilize and act in the world. This double lens offers a new view of how design and a diverse set of design practices circulate in sites of collective action rather than commercial production