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DRS2020 Editorial: Pluriversal Design SIG

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Editorial: Pluriversal Design SIG

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The notion of civilizational transition(s) designates the complex movement from dominance of a single, allegedly globalized, model of life – often designated as ‘capitalist hetero patriarchal modernity’ – to the peaceful, though tense, co-existence of a multiplicity of models, ‘a world where many worlds fit’, a pluriverse. (Escobar, 2019, p. 121)

What is Pluriversal Design? We believe it is a form of design that aims to nurture and highlight multiple ways of world-making and create conditions for multiple worlds to flourish. The concept of the pluriverse challenges one of the pillars of Western Modernity that is *universalism*—the idea that we all live in a single world—in favor of a multiplicity of possible worlds (Kothari et al. 2019). Since the 16th century, the world’s history has been told from the point of view and voices of people from Europe and, subsequently, English-speaking North-America (Global North). Today we see the limits of this form of civilization translated into unsustainability, as multiple crises of climate, pandemics, loss of biodiversity, depletion of natural resources, poverty, etc. The recognition that the crises spring out of this model of civilization fosters a conversation about alternatives and new worlds—e.g., transition initiatives. Furthermore, the call for a pluriverse entails an understanding of the destructive impacts of Western civilization (colonialism, globalization, development, etc.) on the worlds of numerous peoples on Earth. Therefore, an important theme is enabling people who were historically marginalized to tell their own story.

The aim of the Pluriversal Design SIG (PluriSIG) within the DRS is to bring the call for multiple perspectives to design research, practice, and education. The foundations of our field are interwoven with the values of modernity, particularly *universalism*, since design was established as a career path as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Could the practice and theory of design be detached from the values and ideals of modernity and used to create new possibilities? PluriSIG aims to explore the many facets of this challenge.

The papers of our sections present several sub-themes of a Pluriversal design. An important

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sub-theme is the visibility of worlds that are usually invisible in the mainstream design narratives, as the experience of mobility in the daily lives of urban marginalized women residing in New Delhi, India (paper 161). Paper 165 examines queer, trans, and non-binary people's potential contribution in designing for sustainable futures. It suggests that a transition to a new civilization is about "changing our frames so that everyone, including women, queer, trans and indigenous people, can be included while holding onto their difference".

A notably significant sub-theme is the ethics, principles, and practices of collaborations between designers and non-Western communities (papers 228, 277, and 387). Paper 228 interrogates the notion of 'whiteness' in design practice, particularly the issues associated with non-Indigenous designers working with Indigenous peoples. Paper 277 looks into anti-oppression mindsets for collaborative design, recognizing that designers can unintentionally harm the people with whom we collaborate without an awareness of historical privilege and oppression. Paper 387 examines community-based co-design initiatives through an equity lens, recognizing pitfalls of co-design and design thinking approaches and proposing modifications to these frameworks.

By discussing these sub-themes, we hope to contribute not only to the call for a pluriverse but also to the debate about the future of our discipline in a civilizational transition.

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For more information on the Pluriversal Design SIG, please visit the SIG's webpage at <https://www.designresearchsociety.org/cpages/sig-pluriversal-design>. To find out whether the SIG is organising a satellite event to the DRS2020 conference, or just to get in touch with members and see news on the SIG, please visit the SIG webpage.