

Editorial: Conversations

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The DRS2018 Conversations track is an evolving platform to cultivate experimental formats and open up alternative outlets for research to extend and challenge our understanding of design research. The DRS2018 conference hosted 21 Conversations on a range of topics including design pedagogy, ethics, feminism, inclusivity, design policy, and decoloniality. The sessions explored such topics through a range of media including postcards, radio, audio recordings, microsites, provocations, orchestrated calls for submissions, and co-conceived booklets. This volume presents a set of reflections on the Conversations hosted during DRS2018 in Limerick.

Questions of 'care' arise in the first two Conversations. Teresa Almeida and colleagues use physical artefacts and the creation of an online archive to explore what it means to design and care for women, by challenging preconceptions of gendered products such as tampons and sanitary towels and mammogram devices. Tanveer Ahmed and colleagues aim to assemble a 'community of care' through artefacts probing how design plays into embedded social structures that perpetuate sexist practices, particularly in education.

The next four Conversations use the media of sound and visuals to critique design's heritage in modernity, to open up new critical avenues in design research through questions of ontology. Eva Verhoeven and colleagues situate their Conversation in two pub snugs, an institution of Irish social life, to explore concepts of embodiment and how dualisms of subject/object or human/non-human worlds may be dissolved through audio-visual media, to explore new pathways for a field of critical and imaginative design research. Similarly, Jane Norris and Elvin Karana make connections with the object world to build understanding on how we might 'codesign equitably'? Theirs is an endeavour into 'decolonising design through sound'. Kate McEntee and colleagues use listening and storytelling to develop an expansive inquiry into a feminine approach to design, building on critiques of universalism. This leads us to the prescient question of tensions between the political and the productive in design research. Finally, Sander Mulder and colleagues consider the possibilities and effects of two different philosophical positions on design outcomes; the more familiar philosophy of Pragmatism and a counterpoint in Inventivism.

The next set of Conversations build on these critiques of hegemonic worldviews, epistemology and ontology. Gabriella Hernández and colleagues invite new perspectives to decolonise design through education and perspectives from practice with Indigenous and mestizo communities in Latin America. Monica Lindh-Karlsson and colleagues centre their Conversation on the potentiality of aesthetics to catalyse disruptions in capitalism, Anthropocentrism, and Technocentrism, through novel questions on the opportunities of design and aesthetics to support democratic design practices. Shana Agid and colleagues cultivate discussion on a range of conceptions of critical approaches in design (speculative, participatory, post-critical, feminist) through an open-ended creative process of booklet-making. Finally, Maria Ferreira and Federico Vaz explore the politics of design through the values and



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ideologies that are represented and reproduced through examples of design methods used in policy-making.

Next, we turn to questions of disciplinary developments. Robert Harland and colleagues sketch out the historical evolution of and distinctions between graphic and communication design and the significance of this for research and pedagogy. Michelle Douglas and colleagues critique the faddishness of design thinking, querying its value and meaning through a selection of provocative posters inquiring into what the term implies for the roles and practices of designers in different contexts.

The next three Conversations are concerned with design and change. Liesbeth Fit and colleagues use dialogue as a medium of inquiry and focus their Conversation on the conference themes of 'catalyst' and 'change' to unravel discourses of change. Donal Holland and colleagues query how co-evolution of design education, design practice and design theory coalesce to inform social change. Ella Jamsin and colleagues explore how sustainability engages issues of social change, using theories of complexity and tipping points to develop understanding on how and why change happens in society.

Aisling Kelliher and colleagues name Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a design material, to elaborate questions on how humans and AI can productively coevolve, leading to questions of whose interests are of concern in AI systems, how trust, privacy and power are addressed and problematic dualistic shaping of public narratives. In related work, Helen Armstrong and colleagues focus on the need to update and modernise the concept of Universal Design / Inclusive Design by integrating new critical perspectives and new approaches offered through advances in technology and in machine learning.

The Conversations at DRS2018 have offered valuable and insightful directions for new avenues in design research. They particularly surface questions around the systems of knowledge that inform design research and practice, the politics of design, and how the contemporary concern with design's political orientation may be engaged through practice-based inquiry. Finally, many convenors of Conversations have indicated how their outcomes sparked new relationships, potential future collaborations, and new ways to develop and sustain design dialogues.