

RESEARCH THEME

XL cycle – a.y. 2024/2025

Title of the doctoral research

Beyond Human-Centered Design:
Embracing Non-Human and Non-User Perspectives in Product Development

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Abstract

HCD, or an anthropocentric approach, is increasingly inadequate for dealing with today's challenges and the growing awareness of humans interdependence with all living things. Environmental crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are direct symptoms of the anthropocentric approach that has dominated human development and design. A radical change in the perception of human-environment relationships is needed, recognising that ecosystem health is fundamental for human well-being. To ensure the long-term sustainability of life-supporting ecosystems, it is essential to consider the needs of all species in the design process. Designing for non-humans means recognising the intrinsic value of all life forms and challenging the still dominant notion that human interests should always take precedence. This shift in perspective can open up new frontiers of innovation and creativity. Design that considers a wider range of users, including ecosystems and other species, can inspire unique solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

This research proposal aims to explore the integration of non-human entities (animals, natural environments) and non-users (invisible workers in the production chain, such as miners, farmers and local communities) into the product design process. This initiative is based on the growing need for a holistic design approach that recognises and respects the interdependence between humans, other living species and ecosystems. The research will analyse inclusive design methodologies and develop new design tools to identify effective strategies to minimise the impact of products on often overlooked groups throughout their lifecycle.

The expected contributions of this PhD include a broader theoretical framework that includes all beings affected by product lifecycles, innovative methodologies for integrating ethical and environmental considerations into product design, practical tools for designers aiming for a more inclusive approach, and a basis for more responsible corporate and industrial policies towards society and the environment.

Keywords

Non-human personas, Design for the Pluriverse, Multispecies Design, Other than human