

# RESEARCH THEME

XLI Cycle – a.y. 2025/2026

**Title of the doctoral research** Decolonising design for (intangible) Cultural Heritage. Reframing accessibility, inclusivity and participation for transformative change in a pluriverse perspective

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**Abstract**

In today's world, despite awareness of the need for systemic change and calls for a pluriverse, with a post-human or – better – more-than-human and planet-centric perspective (Escobar, 2018; Forlano, 2017; Tironi et al., 2024), design still often acts as a structure of authority and power.

The Cultural heritage domain (hereafter CH), already the subject of a profound discussion and transformation (Borowieki, Forbes, Fresa, 2016) is regarded as an ecosystem with great cultural complexity (Dameri & Demartini, 2020) that magnifies the tremendous urgency of decolonizing its processes (Tolia-Kelly & Raymond, 2020) possibly with a design approach (Tunstall, 2023) to really address a pluriverse development.

According to the importance of the cultural system in sustainable development (European Commission, 2019), and for a holistic innovation based on culture (Sonkoly & Vahtikari, 2018), this research aims at critically discuss the recent exponential increase in projects addressing the DEAI (diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion) imperative and based on participatory and community-centric approaches, trying to untangle and mitigate the potential prejudices of values and misuses of inclusion, participation and co-creation in CH (e.g paternalistic approaches driven by tokenism, solutionism and toolification).

The research objective is to highlight and assess good practices that succeed in truly decolonizing CH (Brulon Soares, Chagas, Mellado González & Weil, 2022) by empowering and enabling community-led heritage in systemic and long-term transformations, “avoiding an understanding that seeks to pacify, control, erase, or occupy (colonize) the situation from which the ‘other’ speaks” (Schultz et al., 2018, p. 2), exploring also the role of technology in fostering new modes of interdependence, dialogue and power balance for social justice and democracy in CH design.

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**Keywords** Design for Intangible Cultural Heritage, decolonizing process, pluriverse development.