

Pivot 2021
Virtual Conference
July 22-23 2021

DISMANTLING REASSEMBLING

tools for
alternative futures

CALL FOR
PARTICIPATION

“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

AUDRE LORDE, 1984

“An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning; to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image.

IVAN ILLICH, 1975

THE PLURIVERSAL DESIGN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF THE DESIGN RESEARCH SOCIETY (DRS) AND THE PUBLIC VISUALIZATION LAB OF OCAD UNIVERSITY INVITE YOU TO DISCUSS DECOLONIALITY AND SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION.

PIVOT 2021 AIMS TO IDENTIFY TOOLS AND PRACTICES OF DISMANTLING AND REASSEMBLING—THAT COULD FAVOR WAYS OF RESHAPING HUMAN PRESENCE ON EARTH—AS WELL AS CONCRETE CASES OF ALTERNATIVE FUTURE-MAKING FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

As the world faces multiple colossal, interconnecting crises—COVID-19, social unrest around our fragile sphere of earth, climate crisis, plastic pollution, deforestation, ravaging wildfires, the frightening spread of authoritarianism, and so on—there is an increasing awareness that the Western civilizational model and ways of life have reached a crossroads. What is currently asked from humanity is more than damage reduction, but a profound societal transformation: reconceiving cultural and economic models and changing our ways of being, thinking, learning, making, relating, and so on.

THE THEME of Pivot 2021 focuses on the tools that we might design and use to dismantle the structures of the current civilizational model (aka patriarchal capitalist Modernity) and to reassemble the debris into new models, converting debris into the nurturing humus for worlds in the making.

BY TOOLS, we refer to not only artifacts but also to services, symbols, rules, institutions, policies, pedagogies, systems, environments, and so on (Illich 1975). Briefly, tools constitute aspects of social life that we deliberately create to (re)shape the tangible reality. We do not suggest that the entirety of Modernity is negative, but many of its tools and structures have not only failed to deliver their promises but also led us to the verge of a global ecological collapse.

DISMANTLING AND REASSEMBLING, these two intentional movements are complementary in the process of social change. First, we need a phase of dismantling structures and unlearning normalized ways of thinking, being, and making. This conference also aims to move the discussion around decoloniality beyond the (necessary) dismantling phase. After dismantling, the debris – energy, nutrients, materials, bits & pieces – of the old structures has to be reassembled in new ways in new societal models, offering the rich humus for growing new worlds.

*But what new ways? How would we like our world to be?
What kind of new society?*

KEY DATES

Submission of abstracts
EXTENDED TO APRIL 10, 2021

Abstract feedback
MAY 10, 2021

Submission of the video presentation
JULY 10, 2021

Conference
JULY 22–23, 2021

DESIGN is one of the disciplines/activities devoted to creating tools to (re)shape the world, referring to human practices of world-making. In its broadest sense, ‘design’ appeared over 2,5 million years ago when Homo habilis made the first tools (Friedman & Stolterman 2015). Nonetheless, design only emerged as a recognized career path with the Industrial Revolution, becoming a fundamental political technology to the creation of the globalized capitalist world (Escobar 2018). This conference is part of the movement to detach design (as a discipline and human activity) from the values and beliefs of patriarchal capitalist Modernity and redirect it towards new styles of world-making (Escobar 2018; Fry 2017; Taboada et al. 2020).

THE PLURIVERSE, ‘a world where many worlds fit.’ The concept of the *Pluriverse* was proposed by Arturo Escobar (2018), building on the inspiration of the Zapatista movement. It challenges one of the pillars of Western Modernity:

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'universalism'—the idea that we all live in a single world (and that the Modern Western world is the ideal)—in favor of a multiplicity of possible worlds that nurture and respect life on Earth. The Pluriverse framework embraces the idea that significant societal innovations, valuable practices, and alternative futures are emerging from the political margins and communities of the Global South (Kothari et al., 2019). Nonetheless, as a persistent relic of modern colonialism, the Global North tends to not recognize them as valid and valuable contributions towards constructing a better society (Santos 2018).

SOUTH-NORTH/NORTH-SOUTH. The event will bring together designers, artists, scholars, and changemakers from both the Global South and Global North, diversifying ideas, cultures, accents, and voices. We will showcase ideas and initiatives from urban racialized minorities to Indigenous peoples from several countries, as well as designers and scholars who are working towards alternative futures and societal transformation.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

You can participate as presenters (original work) as well as regular audience (attending and joining conversations, see 'registration fees' below).

PRESENTERS: We invite interested designers, artists, scholars, and changemakers to **submit a long abstract (700-1000 words) by April 10, 2021.**

We welcome a variety of contributions — such as case studies, theoretical reflections, visual presentations, story-telling, and methodological considerations—as long as the work considers tools for dismantling and reassembling or alternative future-making. Find several suggested themes below. **We accept contributions in English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French.**

The abstracts will be peer-reviewed by scholars from the design and social innovation research community.

ACCEPTED PRESENTERS will be expected to produce a 3-10 minute pre-recorded video presentation for the Pivot conference itself. We encourage the creative exploration of this medium. Our team will support authors to go beyond the simple 'PowerPoint' with voice over. The video should be seen as a contribution in itself. Videos in languages other than English will be captioned in English, and the discussions will be translated.

Post-conference, the videos will be made available on the Pivot 2021 website and Design Research Society (DRS) YouTube channel.

CONTRIBUTIONS. In addition to the video presentation, after the conference, authors can submit several forms of contribution to be published on our website and in the conference proceedings:

a) Full academic papers (5000-6000 words).

b) Short papers (up to 3000 words). We welcome various contributions, such as reflections, stories, conversions, essays, or manifestos.

c) Visual contributions (such as cartography, story map, gigamap, poster or sequence of photos).

d) Videos (not the same as the conference's video-presentation).

Participants can submit a series of short videos or a longer video exploring their topic in depth. Frames of the videos and transcription may be included in the conference proceedings.

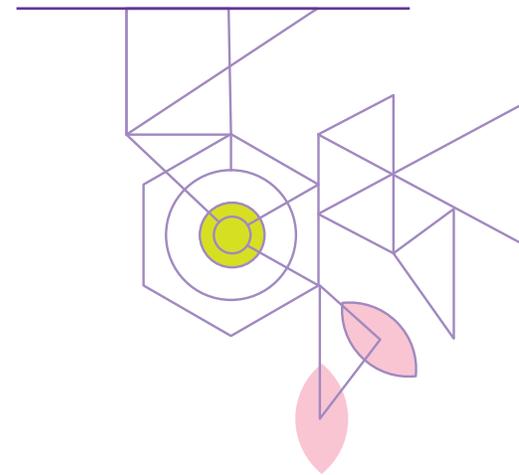
CONFERENCE FORMAT

PIVOT 2021 will be a virtual conference that takes place on Zoom (July 22-23, 2021), featuring keynotes and thematic panels (based on the themes below).

Each day will feature two keynotes and several panels exploring different themes.

The panels will be composed of Presenters (who apply to Pivot 2021 and go through peer-review) and Invited Speakers from the Global South and racialized minorities.

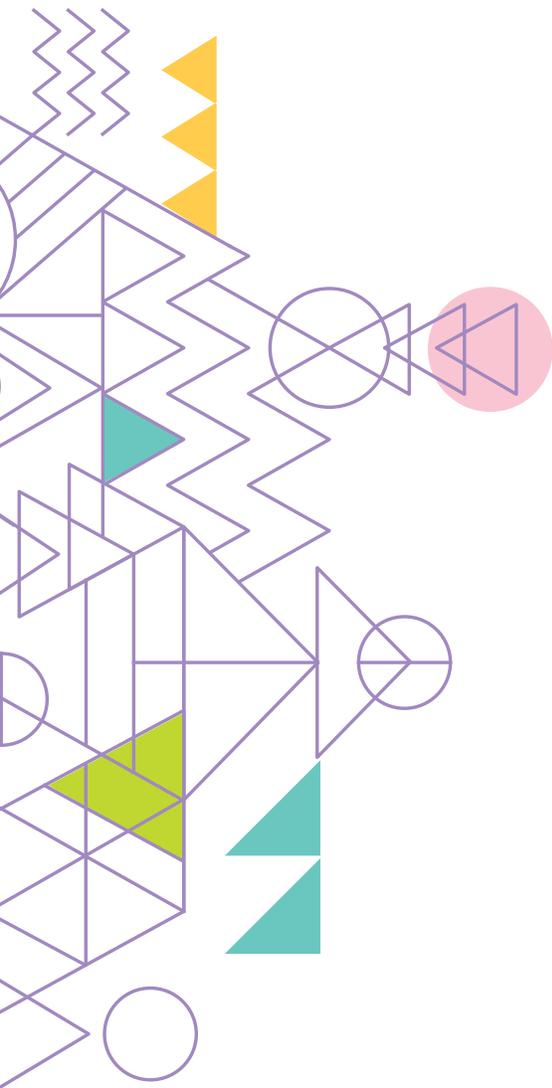
Each author will present a 3-10 minute pre-recorded video followed by a live discussion with the audience. The Invited Speakers will act like discussants and help us create bridges between different worlds and perspectives.



SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

Send us two PDFs
(one with your name and affiliation
and one fully anonymized)

Please submit your
abstracts by email to:
pivot2021toronto@gmail.com.



THEMES

We have pinpointed some specific sub-themes to challenge participants to emancipate their thinking from the “grammar”, lexicon, and conventional categories of western worldview. The sub-themes identify ideas and concepts placed at the foundations of modern thought, which are also wellsprings of ecological unsustainability and inferiorization of others. We invite you to reflect upon the themes and see where you align. You are also free to suggest other topics within the larger theme of tools for dismantling and reassembling and alternative future-making.

FROM SEPARATION TO INTERDEPENDENCE WITH NATURE

A pillar of Western thought is the separation between culture and nature that does not find correspondence in many other knowledge systems. As people do not see themselves as part of nature, nature is something to be controlled and exploited. This separation created the conditions for the environmental devastation that we experience today.

How would our tools change if we understood our planet as an interconnected living system?

How would design and our modes of production change from a perspective of interdependence?

LINEAR VS. CIRCULAR TIME

The idea of linear evolution and growth is one of the foundations of modern thought, but is also a wellspring of unsustainability. Several non-Western cultures have a circular notion of time. A circular future could be a notion of a future that includes memory and ancestrality. For Escobar (2018), ancestrality does not represent an attachment to the past, but rather it stems from a living memory that allows a community to envision a different future.

How would the thinking about the future change if we adopt a notion that embraces ancestrality?

How would a circular notion of time change our style of world-making, the practice of design and strategic thinking?

How could the knowledges of the rhythms and cycles of life from cultures of the South or even from our ancestors be integrated in the design of the future?

REPAIR AND REPURPOSING AS DESIGN

Our industrial modes of production follow a linear system, in which design refers mostly to the production of the new. In a culture obsessed with novelty, objects are not designed to last, age well, and be repurposed; on the contrary, we get ‘built-in obsolescence.’ No need to explain that most industrialized objects do not disappear from the environment (only a small amount of plastic is recycled). Trash is something that is merely moved out of people’s sight, usually dumped on marginalized and vulnerable peoples. Thus we make the case to put repair and repurposing at the center of our thinking of design for sustainability (Beniwal 2020).

*In what forms can repair and repurpose serve as tools for design longevity?
What is a design that transforms and evolves with ageing?*

NON-COLONIAL FUTURE THINKING

Under the worldview of Modernity any alternative to an industrial market-oriented future is seen as a return to the past. The hegemonic narrative of the future—the bright lights of constant innovation and growth—obligatorily passes through the Global North’s economic model and modes of production. However, alternatives of future trajectories do not lack in the world. As Sousa Santos argues (2016), what is missing is alternative thinking of alternatives.

“The problem is that after five centuries of ‘teaching’ the world, the Global North seems to have lost the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world. In other words, it looks as if colonialism has disabled the Global North from learning in non-colonial terms, that is, in terms that allow for the existence of histories other than the ‘universal’ history of the West.

BOAVENTURA SOUSA SANTOS, 2016

How to integrate into future thinking the cosmovisions and visions of the future of Indigenous, Afrodescendant and place based-communities?

What tools can be created to facilitate this process?

LEARNING WITH THE SOUTH

The Global North does not recognize much of the knowledges, innovations, and technologies produced by the Global South as valid contributions to the future. Until today, the systemic extraction of raw commodities from (former) colonies finds its analogue in academic practices that extracts 'raw' data from communities to be processed into refined theories that follow the Western epistemic canon (Tilley 2017). There is a tendency to extract only the part of the South's knowledge that fits in the Western worldview and epistemology, without a respect for the integrity of that knowledge system.

What ways of using design or teaching design created by and for people in the Global South are deeply rooted in their specific contexts and worldviews?

EDUCATION FOR NEW WAYS OF BEING

The focus of our educational system is still to prepare workers for industries, the knowledge economy, and the professions of modern life (including Design) without much concern for the mental health and well-being of students, and even less for the health and flourishing of the environment and societies.

Our society has tools to educate for the marketplace, but how to educate for other ways of being in the world?

What tools can be created and used to enable the emergence of other styles of world-making and alternative ways of being in the world?

RESILIENCE AS FUTURISM

One could imagine that communities struggling with poverty, violence, and oppression would not be able to (re)design their circumstances and create new forms of life. And yet, as Escobar (2018, 2020) argues, it is precisely in those cases—Indigenous, Afrodescendant, and peasant communities in the Global South, and depressed regions of the Global North— that new visions for the future and alternatives of life are flourishing. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to think about the future in contexts of extreme violence or poverty. People living in these contexts often say, "How to think about the future if we are dying today?" or "How to see beyond the circumstances of the present, when it involves pain and trauma in such extreme proportions?"

What are the tools to support the resilience, imagination, creativity, exercise of desire and self-determination of such communities?

COMMUNICATION(S) BETWEEN MULTIPLE WORLDS

We believe the Pluriverse involves reconceiving and redesigning the forms of interaction between different cultures. We encourage the participants to submit videos of their dialogues/collaboration with partners from different worlds.

How to create fruitful dialogue between partners from different worlds in which both worldviews (or knowledge systems) are respected and deemed as valuable to the creation of the future?

IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic, with its rupture with normality, created the conditions to accelerate the process of unlearning and dismantling established cultural and economic models and lifestyles.

What new forms of social life are emerging from this crisis?

PIVOT CONFERENCES

Pivot is a series of virtual conferences organized by the Pluriversal Design Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Design Research Society (DRS).

Its first edition, **PIVOT 2020: DESIGNING A WORLD OF MANY CENTERS**, was hosted by the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking at Tulane University

Check Pivot 2020's website
<https://taylor.tulane.edu/pivot/>

The 2021 edition is hosted by **OCAD University** (Toronto, Canada), an institution committed to decolonizing design education and research.

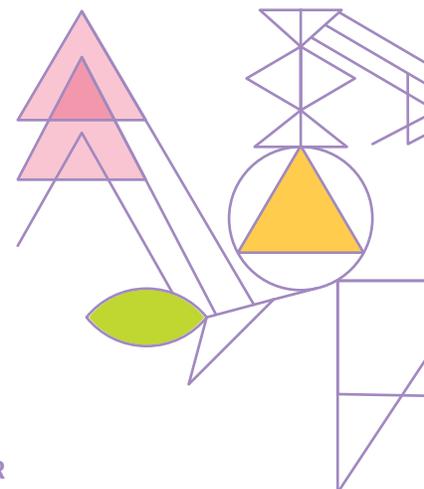
Learn more about:

DESIGN RESEARCH SOCIETY

**PLURIVERSAL DESIGN
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**

OCAD UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC VISUALIZATION LAB



OTHER

**WHAT THEMES WOULD
YOU SUGGEST?**

Email us at
pivot2021toronto@gmail.com

REGISTRATION FEES

(IN CANADIAN DOLLARS)

You are not required to pay a fee to submit your abstract. We will allow registration on the conference website once it is live.

PRESENTERS

Pivot world-weaver presenter: 200 CA\$
(Recommended amount. Choose this if you are at an elite institution with a budget for conferences and can support low-income presenters to participate)

DRS Member (professional): 80 CA\$

Regular presenter (early bird): 100 CA\$

Regular presenter: 120 CA\$

STUDENT (UG or Grad, any institution)

DRS Student Member: 55 CA\$

Student presenter (early bird): 65 CA\$

Student presenter: 75 CA\$

Author registration includes publishing and archiving costs.

Scholarships: If you are keen on being a Presenter but are unable to afford the fee owing to economic hardships (covid or otherwise), please let us know with your application if you would like to be considered for one of our limited scholarships.

AUDIENCE

This is for those attending the conference but not presenting.

Pivot world-weaver attendee: 100 CA\$
(Recommended amount. Choose this if you are employed at an elite institution with a budget for conference attendance. This payment mode helps us support low-income attendees)

DRS Member attendee: 65 CA\$

Regular attendee: 80 CA\$

DRS Student attendee: 30 CA\$

Student attendee: 40 CA\$

If you are keen on attending but are unable to afford the fee owing to economic hardships (covid or otherwise), please let us know. We will try to offer you a reduced fee.

You can register as a DRS member [here](#).

PIVOT 2021 IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY FUNDING FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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Dr. Lesley-Ann Noel (Tulane University – New Orleans, US)

Prof. Immony Men (OCAD University – Toronto, Canada)

Program co-chair:

Dr. Laura Murphy (Tulane University – New Orleans, US)

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Prof. Michele Washington (Fashion Institute of Technology – New York, US)

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CONTACT

Do you still have questions about Pivot 2021?

Email us at pivot2021toronto@gmail.com

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