Opening Remarks
Lesley-Ann Noel

Welcome to the proceeding of Pivot 2021: Dismantling/Reassembling, tools for alternative futures. I am Lesley-Ann Noel, one of the co-chairs Pivot 2021, and co-chair of the Pluriversal Design Special Interest Group of the Design Research Society. Pivot 2021 was organized by both the Pluriversal Design SIG, and our generous hosts and colleagues at the Public Visualization Lab of OCAD University. During our conversations over two days, we aimed to identify tools and practices of dismantling and reassembling that could favor ways of reshaping human presence on Earth, as well as provide concrete cases of alternative future-making from all around the world.

The idea for the Pluriversal Design Special Interest Group¹ was born after the conference DRS 2018 in Limerick. Renata Marques Leitao and I wanted to create a radical space within the DRS (Design Research Society), where we could challenge hegemony in design, where we could discuss design from many different points of view other than the dominant European and American narratives, a space that would welcome many different ways of knowing and doing and being. With our colleagues, Tanveer Ahmed, Nicholas Torretta, and Xaviera Sanchez de la Barquera Estrada we formed the Pluriversal Design Special Interest Group, which was approved in late 2018. We’ve only been around for just under 3 years, but it has been such an exciting journey so far! With projects like the PIVOT conference which was hosted by Tulane University in 2020 and our Pluriversal Design Book Club, where we introduce designers to writers from diverse backgrounds such as Indigenous writers, Latin American decolonial scholars, writers from the African diaspora.

When we formed the special interest group we set a target, saying that we would recognize our success when:

1. There is greater participation within the DRS, including in other SIGs, of designers from outside of mainstream design practice.
2. There is a recognition of the importance of the multiple perspectives within design research, including those of people from colonized or oppressed parts of the world.

¹ www.designresearchsociety.org/cpages/sig-pluriversal-design
3. There is greater recognition of and interrogation of historical hegemonic power imbalances within design research.

4. There is a ‘re-orientation’ of design to incorporate multiple perspectives and views and a focus on multiple ways of doing and understanding design.

Pivot 2021 is an example of this success. We didn’t know that our fringe group would meet these targets so soon. Our niche conference received 125 abstracts, and close to 200 people registered to attend. This mass of people attended Pivot 2021 to discuss ‘how might we dismantle the structures of patriarchal capitalist Modernity, and how might we reassemble the debris into new models of being and alternative futures. The beautiful Call for Papers² was led by Renata Marques Leitao with input from many members of our organizing committee: Dr. Laura Murphy (Tulane University), Prof. Michele Washington (Fashion Institute of Technology), Dr. María de Mater O’Neill (Rubberband Design Studio), Prof. Pawel Pokutyczki (Royal Academy of Art), Prof. Maria Rogal (University of Florida), Prof. Sucharita Beniwal (National Institute of Design), Dr. Manuela Taboada (Queensland University of Technology) and Nicholas B.Torretta (Umeå Institute of Design) and Jananda Lima (OCAD University), our conference coordinator.

It is both exciting and frightening to see the explosion of the use of words like decolonization, hegemony, equity, oppression, emancipation, and liberation not just in a fringe space. Now that people know what these words mean, and how to use them, let’s get people to a place of action.

This conference was meant to not just be a talk shop. We wanted people to share theory, actions, and practice. People often ask questions like ‘How do we decolonize this? How do we make something inclusive, pluriversal, anti-hegemonic, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, etc. We asked people to share their ‘doing’ examples, so participants could leave with some clear examples on how to move beyond talk and into action.

We hope you will be inspired and energized by reading the papers. Please also, visit the Pivot 2021 website³ and watch the videos of the sessions. We hope that you enjoy the proceedings as much we have enjoyed curating them, and I look forward to connecting with you at other events of the Pluriversal Design SIG and the Design Research Society.

² Included in the editorial
³ www.pivot2021conference.com/