

# Towards a Design Of, From & With the Global South

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May, 2016

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# 1 Introduction

“You felt there was something unfinished about *you*, as though you had made yourself in such haste you roughened your features unnecessarily. You had the feeling however, that *your* face fitted you extraordinarily. And the identity of your newer self? It was like a dot in the distance which assumed features you could identify, becoming now a man, now a woman – or even an animal...”

Nuruddin Farah, *Maps*<sup>1</sup>

Like my own identity, and as an expression of it, this project is many faceted, almost, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, rhizomatic - composed of multiplicities, pluralities, spread horizontally over a lifetime of having moved and lived across vastly different countries and cultures. In this, I am no different than many millions of others displaced across the world, and, like the protagonist from Nuruddin Farah’s maps, this identity comes together against a backdrop of rising uncertainty with the anxiety typical of the individual that has to adapt to changing life conditions against the backdrop of a world in massive transition, threatened by hybrid, duplicitous, nebulous monsters: the vague existential threats of climate change, mass extinction, and rising inequality in all its forms: social, economic, cultural<sup>2</sup>.

As someone who was educated and has worked in design in both Pakistan and the US, I engender a particularly interesting kind of criticality borne of someone who has spent life on the inside looking out and is aware of outsiders as they look into different cultures. Looking outwards from the North\West, one can see that design discourse has a historically impoverished understanding of the South\East – insofar as we have found accounts of the world outside the Anglo-European sphere, they have been largely framed in the language of either development, as a space to design for, or as cultural outlier or curiosity, as place to salvage foreign practices *from*. Few texts within the lexicon of design studies or history have critically dealt with the question of what design *in* and *of* the Global South\East is and could be. Having been privy, over the course of teaching for many years in Pakistani academia, to many conversations over what direction design pedagogy and practice should take now that the recent introduction of design thinking, human-centered design, social design practice to the booming startup and social sectors in the country challenges what was traditionally a modernist, craft-oriented tradition, I am also aware of the many different obstacles that design practitioners face in developing a rich and powerful discourse around their own work, even as it constantly shifts and changes under local and foreign pressures.

Intertwined with the challenges of dealing with unfamiliar methods and canons is a local history of design practice both as commercial art and as fine art practice (the boundaries between art and design are blurry in Pakistan, with many famous painters and sculptors also practicing as graphic designers and architects), and also as a political practice in countering state and corporate power, especially as it presents itself in the form of development<sup>3</sup>. The art and design community has always been in an uneasy tension with the social sector

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<sup>1</sup> Farah, Nuruddin. *Maps*. Vol. 1. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1986), 61

<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour, in “Love Your Monsters”, characterizes the present natural and artificial crises facing the planet as monsters, things that are “imbroglios, mixing many more heterogeneous actors, at a greater and greater scale and at an ever-tinier level of intimacy” (Latour, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> For example, the urban planner and social activist Arif Hasan has been heavily involved in tracing the development of the city of Karachi and fighting for the land rights of the poor; the art\design collective The Tentative Collective have been raising awareness through both public projects about the city and oppressed communities; venues for public intellectual discourse like T2F, the creation of the late activist Sabeen Mahmud, have begun regularly holding programs and workshops on design practice.

and with corporate enterprise, and especially within the last decade, with more and more designers turning to social projects amidst a backdrop of rising intolerance and violence in society, state oppression of marginalized peoples, and an economic boom for the educated middle class and a spate of funding from international organizations to fund social enterprise projects, questions of what a modern Pakistani design equipped to deal with local problems and yet still consistent with a syncretic culture emerging from a colonial past and drawing from South Asian, Middle-Eastern, Persian, and Anglo-European traditions should be have become central to contemporary practitioners<sup>4</sup>.

It is this syncretism that I too am in search for, something that strikes a balance between the pressures of globalization and the unique circumstances of the local, a hybrid design that navigates, negotiates and bridges North\West and South\East without asserting any kind of either\or hierarchy between the two. What does a discourse of design of, from and with the Global South, entail?

## 2 Brave New World

If the ontology of the human was defined by nomadism and tribalism for the first 1.5 million years of our evolution prior to the Neolithic Revolution, and by regional settlement and cultural individuation for the roughly 12,000 years after until the industrial revolution, its 20<sup>th</sup> century character can be categorized by globalization, displacement, and hybridity<sup>5,6,7</sup>. This new human, whether free or restrained or forced to move across the globe, it's desires, knowledge, body and agency shaped by influences both local and global, against the world which it is inextricable from and which is equally fragmented, poses a problem to the way we think about how we create what we know to be certain about the world.

As Appadurai notes in *Globalization and the Research Imagination*, the rapidity and totality with which globalization, especially with its economic logic of capitalism and political logic of political power extending outwards of the Anglo-European sphere after a rapid period of decolonization over the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has extended over the globe has caused a “*disjuncture between the globalization of knowledge and the knowledge of globalization*” in the sense that it becomes extremely difficult to capture and define what its definitive nature is, and thus can only be captured in terms of the kinds of ruptures and differences it creates<sup>8</sup>. For researchers, therefore, any kind of epistemological project requires both collaboration, as Appadurai argues, in an international sense, drawing from various local systems of knowledge, but also simultaneously a decentering of the kind of authority North\Western knowing and doing has held. In this Appuradai echoes the concerns of thinkers operating within the sphere of what has become postcolonial and decolonial cultural studies, especially insofar as they address issues of modernity and globalization in the context of a history of global colonization by

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<sup>4</sup> I have explored the particularities of Pakistani design noting the kinds of concerns and questions being raised and speculating as to what future directions practice could take more fully in a prior paper, *Politics & Method* (Ansari, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> There is growing scholarship to support that human identity through early prehistory prior to the Neolithic was strongly characterized as being defined by compositeness as opposed to individuality and by what one did in a given context as opposed to any personal qualities - tribal human identity was something constructed through interactions with individuals in specific contexts, i.e performative and social, rather than seen as a development of the self-influenced by structures that ‘stand above’ the individual (Gamble, 2007)

<sup>6</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. "Signs taken for wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817." *Critical inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 144-165.

<sup>7</sup> Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy." *Theory, culture and society* 7, no. 2 (1990): 295-310.

<sup>8</sup> Appadurai, Arjun. "Globalization and the research imagination." *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 160 (1999): 232

Europe and the Americas and the struggles of countries and peoples that had been colonized in the wake of the creation of a world-system that operates internationally through political and financial institutions like the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank.

More generally, even from within the North\Western academic sphere especially within the last few decades, there have been strong moves to collapse the distinctions between the artificial, natural, and the social, and to move away from the strong positivism that dominates the nature of practice and theory and from anthropocentrism, in seemingly disparate disciplines. Thus traditional sociology is challenged by actor-network theory, systems thinking and cybernetics through living systems theory, critical theory by feminist posthumanism, and philosophy by speculative realism, all movements that emphasize hybridity, difference and disjuncture, and position themselves as projects of de-centering the dominant opposition in binaries, whether it be subject\object, natural\artificial, male\female etc. But it would be a mistake to assume that these projects of transforming and shifting academic discourse are purely intellectual endeavors – following on the heels of 20<sup>th</sup> century postmodern philosophies analyzing the nature of institutional, state and global power, and cultural theory focusing on postcolonial subjectivities and landscapes, new movements have very explicit (and ambitious) political projects of transformation. For example, as we shall examine further throughout this paper, the decolonial turn in cultural theory rose as a movement differentiating itself from the largely academic project of postcolonial theory with the explicit political task of delinking contemporary academic theory from its North\Western epistemological roots and from the centers of global Eurocentric cultural, economic and political hegemony, recovering not only South\Eastern systems of knowledge but building a base from which to engage, subvert and transmute existing local systems of oppression based on race and class politics<sup>9,10</sup>.

Apart from the hermeneutic dimension, with its aims of drawing out different South\Eastern ways of interpreting and knowing the world (the primary focus of thinkers like Walter Dignolo and Anibal Quijano), the second dimension focusing on the subjectivities of the marginalized shaped by globalized coloniality (largely represented by thinkers like Gayatri Spivak and Gloria Anzaldúa), and the agential or affective dimension, focusing on the actions of actors around the world engaged in projects of emancipation (described best in the accounts of groups and communities struggling to assert their claims against institutions and states by thinkers like Arturo Escobar), all of which we will be discussing in the next section of this paper, I argue that a fourth dimension, that of the material, is equally important. Human knowledge, experience, identity and agency are shaped and organized as much by material artifacts and spaces as they are through an engagement in politics. In the Arendtian sense of the material as that which gives coherence and continuity to human existence, artifacts, environments, and even processes, all of which are *designed*, are what allow relations of power to persist, in empowering and constraining the agency of bodies to act in the world, in revealing and obscuring various aspects of our earthly existence, and in proscribing and excluding meanings<sup>11</sup>. Arguments for the primacy of the material go back as far as Marx, in that he

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<sup>9</sup> As Ramon Grosfoguel argues in his essay on postcolonial and subaltern studies and the necessity of decolonizing both, the problem with Latin American and South Asian approaches to postcoloniality was that they were mainly critiques of the western canon and analyses of subalternity and marginalization from within the western intellectual tradition, and thus bound to that tradition instead of transcending it (Grosfoguel, 2011). Grosfoguel thus argues that a truly decolonial theory of culture would need to draw from sources outside of the Western canon and from the marginalized, subaltern populations that it seeks to study.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, attacks on the positive social sciences as the dynamo of late capitalism have come from theorists like Roberto M. Unger, who, attacking economics in particular, has argued that the ‘false necessity’ of modern economical theory, whereby it lays claim to describing a limited set of economic systems (capitalism and its alternatives) as though they were natural (thus its claim to being a science) is false, and that the task of economists is not to describe the market as though it were natural and thus unchangeable, but to speculate and to think of alternatives beyond our current economies that serve the best interests of humans and the world they live in (Unger, 1975)

<sup>11</sup> “From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that—in contradiction to the Heraclitean saying that the same man can never enter the same stream—men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table.” (Arendt, 1958, pp. 137)

allocates technologies and infrastructure to the “base” of societies, which, along with other factors like geography, land, resources etc. determine the “superstructure”, or the culture, traditions, laws, ideas, art of nations and communities, and philosophers of technology, in a long tradition going back to Heidegger have argued for that the artifacts we make in turn shape and make us<sup>12 13</sup>.

Additionally, and this is something that Heidegger initially formulates, what is constituted as known is no less contingent on our engagement with the world than on our disengaged reflection on the world, including our interactions with and through material artifacts. What is constituted as human knowledge is imbricated in the many instruments and mechanisms of what we have created as artifice, and this thesis is thus concerned with not only how we know ourselves and the world, but works with the premise that we constitute ourselves as subjects through acts of designing and making, even in the most minute and mundane of everyday practices<sup>14</sup>. Following Heidegger, there is now a complex discourse on technology that takes about how technologies shape and mold our perception and experience (e.g. the work on how technologies mediate human experience by Don Ihde and Peter Paul Verbeek), how human thought is different from machine “thinking” (Hubert Dreyfus’s critiques of A.I), and how technologies shape political relations (e.g. Langdon Winner on race relations and urban planning, or the feminist technoscience of Judy Wajcman). All of these discourses reveal that technologies, the outcomes of careful research, planning, and implementation, are essential to shaping human existence.

Because these acts of making and designing ourselves and our worlds are constitutive and willful, the design disciplines, as the formal sphere of activity concerned with the construction of the artificial, are always *futural* and *ontologically* oriented, as the design theorist Tony Fry would put it i.e. they make us who we want to be, rather than simply reiterate what we are. So therefore, the state of the world that we find ourselves in today is something that we have designed into being, albeit not with a great deal of foresight, and certainly not in a plural, collective effort that takes into account the lives of billions across the world that share radically different life worlds: “to be born into the environment of a European city is to arrive into a dramatically different ontologically designing condition generative of another kind of becoming”<sup>15 16</sup>. For Fry, this neglect of others in design is what gives the modern age its unsustainability, and the current ecological crisis mirrors the crisis of modernity and the myth of globalization, that “the ambition of the universal being of one world, as it stands upon an ethnocentric paradigm of being modern, is inherently unsustainable.”<sup>17</sup>

The premise of this thesis is firstly, that mainstream contemporary design discourse needs to more nuanced and complex accounts of the fluid, hybrid, networked and interdependent nature of the human condition today, and especially that of other worlds and other lives, of other ways of being and thinking and acting in the world. This requires an approach that draws from many sources from disciplines that are much more mature in collapsing traditional distinctions, and while speculations and questions have been raised within the last

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<sup>12</sup> Marx, Karl. *A contribution to the critique of political economy*. (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> However, it should be noted that in later postmodern thought, exemplified in the work of Marxist philosophers like Slavoj Zizek, this dynamic is overturned, and it is the superstructure, the ideological and symbolic layer of society, that transforms the material layer of the base, and, following Deleuze and Guattari, I would see them both as mutually constitutive domains that are always interacting and in tension with each other.

<sup>14</sup> Again, recent studies in the social sciences also point to the evidence that we think through making (Ingold, 2013), and that practices of consumption, insofar as they are selective and designerly (Miller, 1995), and practices of craft and labor, whether tangible or digital (Sennett, 2008, McCollough, 1996) are things through which we constantly create and express our identities.

<sup>15</sup> Fry, Tony. *Becoming human by design*. (A&C Black, 2013), 88

<sup>16</sup> Fry recovers from Heidegger the central insight that we are future oriented beings always engaged with the world, and that to be human is to design. I might add here that even as the human condition is futural, and this is also something that Fry also takes from Heidegger, we never create things out of thin air, but are always historically situated in a culture, context, environment etc. that predates our existence.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 152

decade around say, postmodern feminist theory and interaction design, postcolonial theory and interaction design, and subaltern theory and participatory design, one might argue that comprehensive accounts of design as meta-discipline and as a major sphere of human activity are lacking in contemporary critical theory<sup>18 19 20</sup>.

What we need to acknowledge is the exclusionary nature of design discourse today. As design activity and discourse from the North\West center looks outwards towards markets across the globe, and as design histories are written, what is excluded is the incredibly rich and diverse activity of design practitioners and thinkers operating outside of this center. While critiques and responses from both within the mainstream and outside have risen especially in the last decade, discourse on the South\East is by and large paternal and colonial, and discourse from the South\East rarely finds its way to the mainstream. This, again, is also an epistemological problem in addition to being a political one: in excluding the many different ways of knowing coming from other cultures, academic and professional discourse in design does itself no favors in limiting its own possibilities of futuring and in tackling the kinds of collective problems all humans face on the planet – what designers need to better understand is difference.

Lastly, design discourses lack an acknowledgement of the ways in which power operates through design, both literally as a form of ‘frozen politics’ in the very material artifacts it makes and the sites and spaces it constructs, but also in the sense that these artifacts and spaces, in restraining specific human beings, reproduce the apparatus of global and local institutional arrangements. In this sense, as we shall see in the next sections, design as a force of globalization reproduces colonialism and reinforces centers and margins, at the level of the city, the state, and the world-system, and can thus be seen as a tool for oppression and disenfranchisement. What we need is therefore an account of design that de-centers and fractures hegemonies of power and re-centers the concerns of the marginalized and the oppressed around the world.

All of these are also explicit aims of postcolonial projects, especially in their turn towards subaltern studies and diasporic\transnational studies, as they turn towards the study of and from the marginalized and oppressed of the world and to understanding the new kinds of subjects that are products of globalization, and of decolonial projects, a loose, interdisciplinary movement of thinkers around the world with common concerns challenging the reduction of forms of difference under the rubric of globalized late capitalism. But to situate design in relation to the analyses and speculations of these disciplines will require us first to understand what postcoloniality and decoloniality are concerned with and what they have to offer.

### 3 A Short History of Postcolonialism & Decoloniality

Postcolonial studies first emerged as an academic discourse in the 1960s following the independence struggles of the former colonized nations of the world, in Latin and South America, Asia, and Africa after World War II, when the last vestiges of the regimes established by the old European empires collapsed and cultural theorists began to turn to the problematization and analysis of what colonialism was, what its logics and impacts were both within the Anglo-European world and in the former colonies, and what the present relation of the

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<sup>18</sup> Bardzell, Shaowen. "Feminist HCI: taking stock and outlining an agenda for design." In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, pp. 1301-1310. ACM, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Irani, Lilly, Janet Vertesi, Paul Dourish, Kavita Philip, and Rebecca E. Grinter. "Postcolonial computing: a lens on design and development." In Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems, pp. 1311-1320. ACM, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Winschiers-Theophilus, Heike, and Nicola J. Bidwell. "Toward an Afro-Centric indigenous HCI paradigm." International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction 29, no. 4 (2013): 243-255.

former colonies, still finding themselves in a world where economic and political power lay with the Northern Hemisphere, was and what it meant to the identities of peoples and states to belong to a world where the ties to both distant, autonomous pasts, more recent colonial histories and the demands of the present competed with each other.

Postcoloniality proceeds from the presumption that the colonization of the non-European world and its subsequent division into distinct territorial units after decolonization in the fashion of the European nation states created a rupture or break from the past – that colonization was a distinct phenomenon in human history because it proceeded on the assertion of a hierarchy of difference between the colonizer and colonized in the sense that the colonized people's society and culture was seen as inferior to a Europe, and this became a rationalization of the plunder of resources and labor, and eventually, of the extension of European sovereignty and institutionality over colonized lands<sup>21</sup>. It is the nature of this rupture and its continuing repercussions that postcolonial theorists seek to analyze.

This rupturing was done also by not only the belittlement and displacement of indigenous knowledge, but also materially, by transforming the environment and space that colonized peoples occupied and fracturing it into different, distinct sites; as Franz Fanon, one of the earliest thinkers of postcoloniality notes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations... The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous"<sup>22</sup>. What Fanon is concerned with, and what is particularly relevant to designers, is that colonial subjects are created through the violent intervention of the material – both by constraining them to specific sites and allowing only limited access to resources (prisons, border fences, even airports) and through the introduction of material artifacts (Fanon, in a later book, spends a chapter writing on the practice of veiling among Algerian women and how the French sought to displace it by making western dress a necessary condition to belong to the intellectual class). Far from being syncretic, Fanon identifies the logic of colonialism as being one of domination – the master employs violence in order to dehumanize and subjugate local peoples into becoming slavish, but for Fanon, the answer to colonialism lies not in replicating the systems that the Europeans left behind, which will lead to repetitions of the same logic of domination between the classes and ethnicities in the former colonies, but to find new alternatives and think of new futures<sup>23</sup>.

In order to colonize, the European states had also to accomplish another thing: the division of the world into a binary system of 'us and them'. This is the focus of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which analyzes the creation of a homogenous 'Orient' (the South\East) that is knowable only by an 'Occident' (the North\West) that discovers it and gives it an essential character that then shapes the way the South\East manifests in the popular imagination of the North\West: the image of the Middle East and Arabs as, for example, unscrupulous, motivated by money and success, lacking in coordination and unity, and yet at the same time possessing a certain mysterious allure and exoticism, as Said notes, is constantly reinforced in North\Western popular culture and used politically to fire up

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<sup>21</sup> One of the best known examples of this is Lord Macaulay's 1835 minute on education, where the argument for the use of English as the primary language of instruction and western education to replace local systems was laid out on the grounds that "when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers." (Macaulay, 1835).

<sup>22</sup> Fanon, Frantz, and Jean-Paul Sartre. *The wretched of the earth* (Grove Press, 1963), 38-39

<sup>23</sup> "It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing apart of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity... if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries." (Fanon, 1963, pp. 315)

the popular imagination in support of causes and interventions in the Middle East by Anglo-European interests<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, this flattening of cultural difference is not merely something limited to the imaginations of the West, but still reproduces itself and persists, according to Said, in the desires and aspirations of postcolonial peoples across the world today: “if all told there is an intellectual acquiescence in the images and doctrines of Orientalism, there is also a very powerful reinforcement of this in economic, political, and social exchange : the modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, how people wish to dress, what they choose to buy, how they choose to live their lives, is modelled on the culture that the North\West has to furnish, in a continued form of cultural domination that forecloses any alternatives that local cultures might have to offer.

Said’s work opened up the field of cultural studies by exposing how colonial subjects were taken and constructed into objects to be investigated and scrutinized, and eventually molded and governed. Later writers like Gayatri Spivak further analyzed and critiqued how marginalized subjects from the developing or ‘third’ world were represented in North\Western discourse. In her essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, Spivak actually critiques postcolonial thinkers speaking from the outside by pointing out that in speaking *for* the marginalized or the “subaltern”, a term originally coined by Gramsci – by merely setting them apart *as* subaltern, they reinscribe and reinforce the colonial difference, enacting an epistemic violence<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, the very act of speaking for subaltern peoples or giving them a voice means collecting them under a homogenous identity, and towards the end of her essay Spivak concludes that what speaking to the subaltern opens us to critically reflecting our own privilege: “In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual systematically “unlearns” female privilege.”<sup>27</sup> Any kind of attempt to name difference, say for example, in the term “third world woman”, as Spivak notes, will always reduce the heterogeneity of subaltern experience and silence their voices. Spivak, in critiquing postcolonialism as the privileged voice vouching to speak for the Other, opens it up to a reflexivity whereby it must acknowledge its own status as a discourse. In this way, Spivak comes closer to the kind of critical arguments that decolonial thinkers like Walter Dignolo and Anibal Quijano raise against postcolonial theory.

Apart from the study of the subaltern subject, the other trend in postcolonial thinking that is particularly important to my research is the study of the colonized subject as a hybrid subject, a concept first introduced by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha observes that colonization is something that continues to act as a mirror to the present for postcolonial cultures, constantly reasserting itself and creating cultural difference – in other words, in reaching for a past prior to colonization and reasserting, or “enunciating” one’s own identity as separate from the colonizers through acts and practices, the colonized subject becomes a hybrid, constantly negotiating their identity and translating the past<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup>. In fact, the very notion of culture is inseparable from hybridity, as all culture is the outcome of a negotiation between it and another culture, whereby it asserts its own difference. This notion of hybridity was extended further by writers working in

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<sup>24</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. (Vintage Press, 1979)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 325

<sup>26</sup> Edited by Nelson, Cary, and Lawrence Grossberg. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. (University of Illinois Press, 1988)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 295

<sup>28</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. *The location of culture*. (Routledge, 2012)

<sup>29</sup> As Bhabha notes in his analysis of Fanon’s description of the Algerian struggle for independence: “For Fanon, the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity. They are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation, in the sense in which I have been attempting to recast these words. In the moment of liberatory struggle, the Algerian people destroy the continuities and constancies of the nationalist tradition which provided a safeguard against colonial cultural imposition. They are now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference.” (Bhabha, 2012, pp. 55)

the field of diaspora & transnational studies. Taking and extending the notion of hybridity, writers like Paul Gilroy and Arjun Appadurai are interested in examining globalization and the new kinds of subjects it created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While most traditional postcolonial theory still focused on the concept of identity as tied to the concept of the nation and as bounded culturally, socially, politically, but most importantly, spatially, writers in diaspora and globalization studies point out that far from identities being locked into a pure cultural core, cultures throughout history have always been syncretic, melding and mixing influences<sup>30</sup>. The figure of the immigrant, the refugee, or the transnational worker, or even that of the global citizen, with their access to a world of information through the internet and mass media and the ability to move and travel around the world, exemplify this aspect of hybridity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century citizen<sup>31</sup>.

In contrast to postcolonial theory, decoloniality is a much more recent academic phenomenon, though its thinkers would argue that it can actually be traced back further than postcolonialism – while most postcolonial scholarship deals with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries following the completion of the colonization of South and East Asia, decoloniality traces its narratives all the way back to the colonization of the Americas in the fifteenth century<sup>32</sup>. Emerging from Latin American intellectual thought, as opposed to the largely South Asian scholarly base of postcolonial studies, decoloniality is a much broader movement, sometimes characterized as a shift or turn, within many areas of critical theory and the social sciences, including cultural, ethnic and race studies, but also gender studies, literature studies, sociology and anthropology. Like postcoloniality, decolonial thinkers are also concerned with the relation between the colonizer and the colonized, and the continuing impacts of globalization as a form of contemporary colonization. Unlike postcolonial theory, which focuses on the effects of ‘colonialism’, the term used to describe the institution of European law and order over other cultures, the colonial difference and the ways in which superior\inferior binaries of culture were constructed to subjugate peoples, i.e. a focus on the creation of discourses, perceptions and imaginaries, and which firmly puts itself within the realm of critical cultural studies, the decolonial turn has quite a different focus on ‘coloniality’, which is the central logic through which modernity works, intertwined with questions of how that logic feeds into the organization of power, knowledge and materiality, and with an explicit political agenda both within and without academia: the purification of South\Eastern knowledge and identity from North\Western ontologies and epistemologies.

For the purposes of the paper here I will choose to focus on the key contributions of three decolonial thinkers: the sociologist Anibal Quijano, the semiotician Walter D. Mignolo, and the sociologist Ramon Grosfoguel. The anthropologist Arturo Escobar, because he shares many of the concerns of the above scholars and because he is the only one to explicitly deal with the design disciplines, warrants his own section below.

The idea of the modern world-system as the legacy of colonialism, expressed as the “coloniality of power”, was first proposed by Anibal Quijano in his 1991 paper *Colonialidad y Modernidad\Racionalidad* (translated into English as *Coloniality and Modernity\Rationality* in 2010). In it, he traces the origins of the modern world-system which privileges Anglo-European power to its roots in the conquest of the Americas. In this moment of colonization, he argues, European identity invented itself in relation to other cultures and asserted itself through a set of three systems: hierarchy, based mainly on racial classification, whereby ‘inferior’ races and ethnic groups were reduced to slavery or wiped out; of knowledge, whereby traditional and indigenous knowledge was actively suppressed and supplanted by European knowledge, in some cases to create new social classes amongst the natives; and those of culture, where the phenomenon of modernity and its values were thrust upon native populations, and patriarchy, rationality, consumption etc. were introduced to cultures

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<sup>30</sup> Gilroy, Paul. *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. (Harvard University Press, 1993)

<sup>31</sup> Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy." *Theory, culture and society* 7, no. 2 (1990): 295-310.

<sup>32</sup> Quijano, Anibal. "Coloniality and modernity/rationality." *Cultural studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 168-178.

that were organized along different lines<sup>33</sup>. The displacement of local culture by Eurocentrism in the Americas inaugurated, for Quijano, in the wake of European imperialist expansion throughout the world, the foundations of a monocentric global system of power that had as its center Europe, and later, the US, a system that he terms “the colonial matrix of power”, in which modernity and coloniality go together: “As the center of global capitalism, Europe not only had control of the world market, but it was also able to impose its colonial dominance over all the regions and populations of the planet, incorporating them into its world-system and its specific model of power.”<sup>34</sup> The problem with the concept of modernity is not, as Quijano argues, that its defining attributes (rationality, secularism, anthropocentrism etc.) were exclusive to the Europeans, but that they were claimed as such in the light of a historically European interpretation and became the defining characteristics of a new global system of labor and power.

Walter D. Mignolo takes Quijano’s concepts further and speculates as to what strategies could be possible to counter the influence of the modern\colonial world system. Proceeding from the grounds that the deepest damage done by coloniality was in the form of changed epistemologies, Mignolo argues for an understanding of the “geopolitics of knowledge”, whereby we must understand that the ‘the limit of Western philosophy is the border where the colonial difference emerges, making visible the variety of local histories that Western thought, from the right and the left, hid and suppressed’<sup>35</sup>. Thus, in order to think beyond the limits of Western knowledge systems, i.e. to decolonize them, we must reach out to alternative philosophies, ways of thinking and being, across the world, while at the same time acknowledging that given the localness of knowledge and its spatio-historical development, different knowledge systems and their corresponding value systems will inevitably come into conflict.

Decoloniality, therefore, is a project of liberation, of finding critiques and alternatives to Eurocentric knowledge from the perspective of the colonial difference. This project of finding alternatives involves a de-linking from the tradition of thought that traces itself through the Enlightenment and the Renaissance to Greek philosophy, which, as Mignolo explains in ‘The Geopolitics of Sensing & Knowing’, involves rejecting either subjection or assimilation to Western thought and practice, and instead choosing to embrace “border thinking”<sup>36</sup>. Border thinking and decoloniality, for Mignolo, constitute a radically different approach to envisioning global futures – as he points out, we have three possible scenarios within which the future may unfold today: re-westernization, or the completion of a global capitalist world system without any alternatives, de-westernization, which Mignolo links to the challenges posed to global capitalism and Anglo-centric power from emerging economies like China, India, Brazil and Turkey, involving the adoption of alternatives to capitalism without necessarily thinking outside of European knowledge (the adoption of socialism in China, for example, still remains tied to a distinctly North\Western development while still posing a threat to the current world-system), and decoloniality, which thinks from the border, outside of North\Western thinking, emphasizing the struggles of groups struggling to devise alternatives to state led development and create new futures for their communities.

Lastly, Ramon Grosfoguel further analyzes the characteristics of modernity and the world system, especially in his articulation of the various kinds of hierarchies that impose themselves on indigenous cultures: class hierarchies favoring a classification under the strictures of capitalism (laborer, bourgeoisie, elite etc.); a hierarchy of global labor (extraction and manufacture in the South\East and intellectual

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<sup>33</sup> As Walter D. Mignolo notes in an interview, “post-colonialism presupposes “Orientalism” while in the Americas the question is “Occidentalism,” the very condition of possibility of Orientalism. Without Occidentalism there is no Orientalism. Without coloniality there is no modernity.” (Mignolo, 2000, pp. 28)

<sup>34</sup> Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 223

<sup>35</sup> Mignolo, Walter. "The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (2002): 66

<sup>36</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. "Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de) coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience." *Postcolonial studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 273-283.

labor in the North\West); inter-state political and military institutions dominated by US and European interests (the UN, IMF, WTO, OECD, NATO etc.); racial\ethnic hierarchies favoring Europeans over Non-Europeans (e.g. restricting the movement of Non-Europeans across the globe); gender hierarchies favoring Judeo-Christian patriarchy and reproducing gender divides found in the Anglo-European sphere; sexual hierarchies again emphasizing Judeo-Christian heterosexuality as the norm; spiritual hierarchies positing other religions and faiths in opposition to Christianity (e.g. ideas like Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' pitting Islamic and Judeo-Christian civilization against each other); epistemic hierarchies privileging European knowledge (most visible in the modern day university system); linguistic hierarchies favoring English and other European languages as the de-facto language of administration, trade and politics; aesthetic hierarchies of 'high' versus 'low' art, 'popular' versus 'elite' culture, 'design' versus 'craft'; pedagogical hierarchies (the structure of schools, universities, teaching methods etc. across the world); a hierarchy of the media and mass culture where the global media circuits is dominated by North\Western music, television, dance etc.; an age hierarchy where humans are classified by their ability to be productive; ecological hierarchies where sharp distinctions between the human made world and nature are made, and where the human is privileged; and a spatial hierarchy where the urban is favored over the rural and the city over the community<sup>37</sup>. Grosfoguel warns that rather than fall into a form of identity politics, as subaltern and feminist studies seem to have done, the challenge for decolonial activists is to avoid privileging the interests of any specific group and instead join hands in a struggle to reform systems and economies at multiple levels, so that collective, negotiated struggles by groups trying to win different desirable futures for their communities can be realized. Thus, for Grosfoguel, what different groups disenfranchised by the global world-system in say, the Middle East might want would be very different from those in Latin America, but all provide alternatives to North\Western hegemony, and all, following different trajectories, would conceive of their futures differently.

This realizing of alternate futures is also something that I argue contemporary designers, especially those belonging outside of the Northern hemisphere, are engaged in and should be more reflexive about. Both postcolonial and decolonial studies provide a rich ground to hold up the contemporary practice of design, especially in its more global forms, to analysis and critique, and position us to begin to 'decolonize' our own field. In the following section, I will, imitating the practice of decolonial thinkers, open up one of the seminal texts from within the Anglocentric world system, Viktor Papanek's 'Design for the Real World', and then introduce a text that speculates on what decolonizing design could mean from an outside perspective, in my discussion of the anthropologist Arturo Escobar's 'Notes on the Ontology of Design'.

## 4 Design for the Real World

The oldest argument for a call for a global practice of humanitarian design that attempts to treat the problem of designing for global Others without falling into the trap of either romanticizing local traditions of making or treating them as primitive or simple, ill-suited to complex problem solving, as we find in the early writings associated with the Design Methods Movement, can be found in Viktor Papanek's *Design for the Real World* (Papanek, 1971)<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Grosfoguel, Ramón. "Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality." *Transmodernity* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1-36.

<sup>38</sup> Several key figures in the Design Methods movement, for instance, dealt with indigenous design or craft, especially insofar as they held it up to scrutiny against the newer, methods and planning based approaches that they were advocated – in particular, Christopher Alexander in *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* and his distinguishing of cultures that repeat tradition versus those that can adapt and innovate (it must be stressed that his later work overturns this and celebrates different cultural traditions of designing), and John Chris Jones in *Design Methods* with his analyses of how traditional craftsmen designed for specific problems within local contexts.

It must be noted that Papanek was writing *Design for the Real World* and situating the need for social design in response to two particular problems. The first was a framing of the Global South as poor, handicapped, and in need of Anglo-European aid and development following the gradual decolonization of European colonies across Africa, Asia and Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century and the tussle for allies between the US led western and Soviet led eastern blocs at the height of the Cold War. In this scenario, the emergence of socio-economic theories of international development such as development theory, which stressed global inequities in terms of the transfer of resources and products of labor from the less developed to more developed nations and the unique social and political conditions left behind as the legacy of colonialism which were hindrances to economic growth and productivity, led to a new emphasis on programs focusing on international aid and development like the Structural Adjustment Programs that the World Bank and IMF rolled out in the late 1950s<sup>39</sup>.

The second was Papanek's criticism of contemporary industrial and communication design practice as the drivers of a mass produced culture of conspicuous consumption, given most famously in the opening preface to the book: "There are few professions more harmful than industrial design, but only very few of them."<sup>40</sup> In Papanek's view the design professions, as the primary tool for the constitution and structuring of our material environments, had an inherent responsibility to focus on creating more sustainable and livable futures and to focus on real human needs rather than on "toys and trinkets"<sup>41</sup>. In this sense, Papanek can be seen as both following the general trend of social enterprise, identifying the most pressing problems that require designerly intervention as lying on the peripheries and the margins, both locally (socially and economically marginalized communities), but more importantly, outwards outside the Anglo-European sphere in countries with disadvantaged economies. At the same time, Papanek does recognize the limitations of the way most international development programs framed interventions as one-way forms of assistance: "Aid to developing countries engenders the hatred a cripple feels towards his crutch. What is needed is cooperation that works both ways...there is much we in turn can learn from developing countries about living patterns, small-scale technology, reuse and recycling of materials, and a closer fit between man and nature."<sup>42</sup> Thus, to sum up, the formulation of Papanek's ethos for social design takes the form of the following argument:

- i. Anglo-European society is unsustainable and premised on lifestyles of conspicuous consumption and perpetual growth;
- ii. These lifestyles have been enabled and perpetuated through the disciplines of industrial and communication design;
- iii. Designers should focus on solving real problems: for the developed Northern sphere, this means transitioning to more sustainable lifestyles, while the less developed South needs solutions to its many problems of feeding and sustaining large populations;

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<sup>39</sup> Papanek's writing reveals links both to the emergence of development economics as a way of thinking about the relation of the highly industrialized developed world, i.e. the European and American economies, after World War II, to their former developing colonies, and especially modernization theory, which advocated that developed countries were bound to "assist" less developed nations with influxes of capital, technology, and inclusion into global free markets, as well as the later dependency theory of Hans Singer, which developed in response to the former critiquing it for advocating a dependency of developing countries on the Anglo-European bloc and neglecting the unequal international distribution of labor.

<sup>40</sup> Papanek, Victor. *Design for the real world*. London: Thames and Hudson. (1972): 1

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, xix, xx

- iv. Both North and South can learn from each other – the North\West can learn from the South\East more sustainable practices and lifestyles, while the former can help design for the latter, but more importantly (and this is at the heart of the text), should be helping train local designers to design for their own problems.

Key to Papanek's emphasis in the text that the central role of the humanitarian designer is as educator is his observation that there was an epistemological issue at play in the form of a trend (one which has arguably only increased since the time of his writing in the 1970s and 80s): that design students from peripheral countries, as he characterizes them, were coming to the US and Europe in larger numbers, "seduced by a high-technology, throwaway ethos of design education and praxis now prevalent in the metropolitan regions"<sup>43</sup>. Like the decolonial thinkers we have discussed above, it was his observation that designers born in the South\East and trained in the North\West would, even if they were to return to their home countries, had been trained in ways of thinking about the world rooted in the latter's epistemology, and would return to either practice design as part of a small cultural elite, producing consumer goods that only the monied classes could buy, or, more dangerously, mass produce artifacts and reproduce systems that were as unsustainable and dehumanizing as those in America and Europe. For Papanek then, the solution lay in countries around the world designing educational programs and training designers locally in working with local needs and regional constraints, and with an understanding of cultural nuances.

However, this form of localism in design is at odds with the comprehensive arguments for an ethos in design that is global in nature – that designers working in the Anglo-European sphere have a responsibility to peoples across the world, following a view where Papanek very much seems to subscribe to the thesis in modernization theory that members of the more developed formal economies in the world owe it to the less developed to aid them in solving their local problems. Because Papanek acknowledges that foreign designers working in unfamiliar contexts, no matter how embedded in the local culture, still bear the baggage of their own training, there is this continuous tension at play within *Design for the Real World*: on the one hand, Papanek wants industrial design to move towards a role that concentrates on solving the world's many problems, but at the same time, he seems genuinely concerned that designers moving from the North to work in the South would not only formulate solutions ill-suited to the problems and conditions in those areas, but would actually perpetuate ways of thinking and framing problems that draw from a primarily Anglocentric worldview, with the danger inherent that local ways of designerly thinking and making would be suppressed. Hence, in Chapter 4 of the book which is dedicated to the ethos of social design and to designing for the developing world and towards the end of which he makes an argument about the various degrees to which designers can and should involve themselves in global projects, we find a tentative compromise addressing this tension: foreign designers can involve themselves in global projects, provided they embed themselves completely within the local culture and commit to learning its values and methods, and to training local designers in the same ethos of needs-oriented social design.

However, while Papanek's attempts to formulate a globally responsible design are admirable, the problem, at least from the colonial perspective, appears to be far more complex than it seems. Are design methods and tools, which one presumes, as Papanek has done, are applicable to any situation, politically neutral? Do we all share the same definitions and notions of sustainability, or of development? Don't global power relations favor certain actors above others? And what about the baggage of coloniality and colonial histories? What about the powerful forces of globalization and neoliberal *oikonomos*, where the desires of subjects across the world are subjected to the same forces that Papanek critiques so vehemently in his text? These

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<sup>43</sup> Papanek, Victor. "For the southern half of the globe." *Design Studies* 4, no. 1 (1983): 61

are questions that Arturo Escobar takes up, starting with Papanek's text, in 'Notes on the Ontology of Design', where he begins by reframing the title of Papanek's book into a question: "But which world? What design? What real?"

## 5 Whose World is the "Real" World?

Escobar, a scholar of decoloniality and political ecology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a staunch critic of international development, has been heavily involved with the indigenous rights activist movements (in particular, the Process of Black Communities) of the Cali coast of his native Columbia, and 'Notes on the Ontology of Design' owes its interest in the futurally oriented and collaborative nature of contemporary design to the kinds of work that Escobar has engaged in and written on for most of his career.

Opening with the observation that as the discipline of design studies has matured and the ubiquity of the designed has become explicit (especially with regards to computing technologies and a culture obsessed with celebrating progress as technological), debates about the ethos of design practice and its grounding foundations, i.e. in other words, its ontological status, have opened up<sup>44</sup>. In fact, Escobar's formulation of design praxis in the book is based on the observation made by computer scientist Terry Winograd and Chilean engineer Fernando Flores in their pivotal text on human-computer interaction, 'Understanding Computers & Cognition', that design is ontological, in the sense that it is world forming: what is designed and redesigned is reality. Coupled with recognition that design thinking in its global practice is forming and reforming culture, Escobar then poses the question: what kinds of ways of knowing, acting and being in the world do the design professions espouse?

In Part II of the text, Escobar offers his answer to this question with an examination of the kind of global worldview that drives development: "the tradition we are talking about is variously referred to as 'rationalistic', 'Cartesian', 'objectivist', and often associated with related terms such as 'mechanistic' (worldview), 'reductionistic' (science), 'positivistic' (epistemologically) and, more, computationalist."<sup>45</sup> Escobar, tracing the modern world-system's lineage to the development of colonialism and the industrialization of Europe and the Americas (hence, modernity is a Anglo-European invention) and its etho-political foundations in Judeo-Christian theology and Greek\European philosophy, and outlines the characteristics of the world-system in two ways of thinking: the rationalistic tradition, which he formulates as resting in four different kinds of beliefs that are the heart of the driving imperatives behind modern globalization: in the individual, with an emphasis on the self to the exclusion of the consideration that all living beings are codependent; in an objective reality that exists independent of the immanent, where lived experience is discounted in favor of reductive accounts of the world; in science, as the principal arbiter of what is knowable and what should be adopted in terms of technical development; and in economics as a domain of activity separate from human existence; and more fundamentally, ontological dualisms: the kinds of binary oppositions that root Eurocentric modernity, taking on the three key forms of nature\culture, the west\the rest, and subject\object, in addition to many others. These dualisms, in separating us from others not like us and creating difference, yet also creating a dynamic such that one pole always retains power over the other, are the basis for Anglo-European domination of the world.

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<sup>44</sup> Escobar, Arturo. "Notes on the Ontology of Design." In *Sawyer Seminar, Indigenous Cosmopolitics: Dialogues about the Reconstitution of Worlds*, organized by Marisol de La Cadena and Mario Blaser, October, vol. 30. 2012.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 16

Drawing partly from cultural exemplars but also drawing extensively from the work of living systems theorists, Escobar argues that the way to think beyond dualism and its organizing force is to think in terms of a multifarious, pluralistic relationality – in a relationist ontology, “life is inter-relation and inter-dependency through and through, always and from the beginning.”<sup>46</sup> What Escobar argues for is rethinking design through the lens of political ecology, and an ecological approach, with its emphasis on our coexistence with others not like us, and with the rest of life, would provide the basis for a practice of design that could potentially allow for a plurality of discourses, of ways of thinking and doing in the world. A design that is ontological, in the sense that Winograd and Flores constitute it, i.e. as helping us in “becoming the beings that we are” will thus be consciously oriented in reflecting upon the kinds of beings that we have been, while creating the conditions that enable changing, preserving, or even creating new values and practices where needed<sup>47</sup>. This particular vision of an autonomous society that is self-reflexive and adaptive (taken from Gustavo Estava) becomes the basis for Escobar’s outline of a design that helps empower communities and enables involvement and collaboration on alternative futures.

Interestingly, Escobar already places the emergence of many such projects designing for the “pluriverse”<sup>48</sup> (a plurality of movements and discourses from across the world as opposed to a one world-system) in the many transition movements and discourses that we see emerging across the world. In particular, he points to transition initiatives in the Global North like transition towns in the UK and the Great Transition Initiative in the US, while pointing to both state-driven initiatives and communal grassroots activism in the Global South focused on creating alternatives to international development. This turn in academia can be seen in the form of a rising scholarship in fields as disparate as systems theory, biology, and philosophy focused on rethinking the foundations of modern civilization to meet the challenges of living in a post-fossil fuel anthropocene. Identifying several themes that emerged out of what he terms “transition projects” coming out of Latin America, Escobar terms their concerns as: epistemic decolonization, which involves a reclamation of indigenous knowledge and perspectives that are not Eurocentric, alternatives to development, which involves thinking of growth that is not universal within the borders of the nation-state, transitions to post-extractivism that think about ways of becoming less resource intensive, discourses on the crisis of civilizational model, with a renewed emphasis on the inclusion of marginalized voices and plurality of involvement, and communal logics and relationality, moving away from state-centric conceptions towards a multiplicity of communities in solidarity with each other.

Eventually, the transition movements can be seen as the vanguard and the site for the development of a new critical practice of design, an ontological design that would “contribute to counteract the accelerating ‘wearing down’ of the Commons, a commons that is at once material, cultural, and communal, i.e. the entire fabric of relational worlds.”<sup>49</sup> The challenges for such a practice are many, and in fact, Escobar ends with questions and provocations rather than any concrete outline of such a practice (for example, is an ontological design for the pluriverse even possible or is design activity to be forever tied to its heritage of mass production and consumption?), for the challenge of how to derive and adapt insights from the kinds of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 32

<sup>47</sup> Winograd, Terry, and Fernando Flores. *Understanding computers and cognition: A new foundation for design*. Intellect Books. (1986): 179

<sup>48</sup> Escobar, Arturo. "Sustainability: Design for the pluriverse." *Development* 54, no. 2 (2011): 137-140.

<sup>49</sup> Escobar, Arturo. "Notes on the Ontology of Design." In *Sawyer Seminar, Indigenous Cosmopolitics: Dialogues about the Reconstitution of Worlds*, organized by Marisol de La Cadena and Mario Blaser, October, vol. 30. (2012): 76

paradigm shifts that he has identified into active, transformative socio-technical practices poses a significant challenge for practitioners and theorists alike in design.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

I hope that the above account has laid out the necessity of developing a critical practice of design that can tackle the issues of modernity and globalization. While I have provided the beginnings of an account of decoloniality and its assessment of design practice and thought, this study has neglected to mention several other very important streams of thought within the design disciplines that may need further elaboration in order to flesh out where the field is going more thoroughly.

A key thinker that I have mentioned in passing but who's entire oeuvre of work requires careful analysis is the Australian designer Tony Fry. Fry has spent his career explicating his own definition of ontological design and arguing for a paradigm shift in design thinking towards thinking of the challenge of what he terms as "sustainment"<sup>50</sup>, or our continued survival on this planet given the irreversible effects of climate change. Especially in the latter half-decade, his work has turned increasingly towards a collective assessment of coloniality and continuing unsustainability, and his most recent publication, a volume co-edited with Eleni Kalantidou, 'Design in the Borderlands', takes up Mignolo's idea of border thinking and includes essays by various designers whom he believes to be engaging in design that makes visible the logic of coloniality in material terms. For Fry, "The creation and occupation of space by design cannot but be ideological and known in relation to other places, hence knowing where you are designing, or are going to design, is always geopolitical", and his theory of practice is a very explicitly political one, focused on baring and undercutting the applications of power on the marginalized within the current world-system<sup>51</sup>.

Other authors who have written falling at the intersection of cultural studies and fields like human-computer interaction and computer science are also worth considering, particularly the work of Nicola Bidwell, a South African academic who has worked extensively with communities in sub-saharan Africa and writes about the reframing of HCI practice from a Fanonian perspective, and Syed Mustafa Ali of the Open University, who writes about decoloniality and practices of computing, and is especially interested in questions of what an Islamic decoloniality could mean. In addition to this, a new generation of young design academics are increasingly interested in using decolonial lens to reformulate design practice, including several very active critics of contemporary design movements like critical design and social design include Matt Kiem, Pedro Oliviera, and Luiza Prado.

Lastly, some early investigations into the phenomenon of space and spatiality, a thread that I find repeatedly in the decolonial stress on the geopolitical, and on excess as opposed to scarcity, a trait of adaptive systems that I found conducting research in Karachi and that resonated deeply with me as I did coursework on systems theory over the last year in Pittsburgh, have given me some rich areas to continue searching for an account of what a design of, from and with the Global South could be.

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<sup>50</sup> Fry, Tony. "Design Futuring: Sustainability, Ethics and New Practice." (Berg, 2009)

<sup>51</sup> Kalantidou, Eleni, and Tony Fry. *Design in the Borderlands*. Routledge, (2014): 6

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