

THE LIMITS OF HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

Speculative Design and Posthuman Condition

Ákos Schneider | Budapest | November, 2021.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, Doctoral School
Art Science (Design Theory) PhD
Division of Design Culture Studies

Supervisors:	András Beck, PhD associate professor, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
	Bálint Veres, PhD habil. associate professor, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
Chairman of Doctoral Committee:	József Tasnádi, DLA professor, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
Committee Member:	Judit Bényei, PhD associate professor, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
Committee Member:	Sándor Krémer, PhD habil. associate professor, University of Szeged

Thesis

- [A] Human-centered design is an integral part of the modern design tradition, and it aims to adapt modern technological infrastructures to the individual human scale and user-centered experience. The questions of human-machine interaction are therefore at the heart of modern design.
- [B] Anthropocentric design models become problematic in the light of complex socio-technical systems and currently unfolding ecological shifts. In understanding these processes, design culture studies can draw on contemporary post-dualist social theories.
- [C] A critique of human-centered design can be conducted through the multilayered diagnoses of the posthuman condition and an exploration of the possibilities of speculative design. Linking these two subjects facilitates a joint critical analysis of the modern ideals of anthropocentrism and functionalism (i.e. problem solving).
- [D] The parallel effort to humanize technology and mechanize the human has been a dominant agenda from the early institutional emergence of modern design to the present day, linking human-centered design to the mainstream of global innovation culture. Modern design plays a role in producing the posthuman condition.
- [E] In terms of socio-technical networks, the products of 'good design' are at the same time *channeling* and *concealing* in their nature. The human-centered design paradigm does not provide a satisfactory framework for interpreting and redesigning user experiences maintained in this way.
- [F] Alternative design models should be outlined and implemented. Privileging the speculative component of design allows us to explore the limits of human-centered design. Speculative design typically detaches the temporal-spatial dimension of design from

the scale of the individual human and/or attempts to expand the perspective towards non-human actors.

- [G] The practical domain of speculative design extends beyond the contemporary art world and can appear as a hybrid, post-disciplinary practice in different constellations of scientific and cultural spheres. It enables new roles and crossovers between the fields of design, art and research.

—