12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

Panel 66. More-than-(Just)-Human Politics of Relating

Convenors:

Elisa Giaccardi, Politecnico di Milano

Valentina Rognoli, Politecnico di Milano

Emma Sicher, Humboldt-Universität Berlin

Francesco Nappo, Politecnico di Milano

Francesco Vergani, Politecnico di Milano

Laura Forlano, Northeastern University

Martín Tironi, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Keywords: artificial intelligence, biodesign, more-than-human, multispecies, politics

Recent focus on human-nonhuman relations has prompted a rethinking of policy frameworks and governance models that integrate diverse perspectives and needs beyond the human (Heitlinger et al., 2024; Tironi et al., 2024). Instances such as the legal recognition of rivers as rights-bearing entities challenge anthropocentric assumptions and suggest policies that honor the needs and agency of other entities as well as their entanglements with human life (Te Awa Tupua, 2017). Extending this perspective, emerging technologies are provoking inquiry into the political and social roles of artificial entities (Lupetti et al., 2019), questioning conventional human-technological boundaries (Bridle, 2022). These perspectives align with concepts of situatedness (Haraway, 2016) and diffraction (Barad, 2014), which emphasize the contextual, relational, and non-linear ways in which entities interact across ecological and technological dimensions. Situatedness stresses that perspectives are shaped by specific contexts and interactions, while diffraction points to the ripple effects of these interactions across boundaries and scales, expanding our understanding of morethan-human entanglements.

Amid mounting environmental and technological crises, human-centered design visions are increasingly inadequate (Forlano, 2017; Tironi at al., 2022; Giaccardi et al., 2024). Incorporating nonhuman perspectives, with attention to both situatedness and diffraction, enables a reconceptualization of politics as multispecies justice, ecological interconnectedness, and recognition of the agency embedded within materials and organisms that share the world. This panel invites contributions that explore, theorize, and operationalize these ideas across social, ecological, and technological spheres. We seek to expand traditional political discourse to incorporate multispecies justice (Chao & Celermajer, 2023), ecological entanglements (Aiyadurai et al., 2023), the interdependencies of humans and (possible) materialities with the environment (Avila, 2022), and the agency of nonhuman entities (Wakkary, 2021).

As distinctions between human and nonhuman actors blur in areas like artificial intelligence (Giaccardi & Redström, 2020), multispecies cohabitation (Roudavski, 2020), and regenerative material ecologies (Karana et al., 2023), this track encourages critical engagement with how these interdependencies influence power structures, coexistence, governance, and decision-making processes.

We are interested in papers that:

- challenge anthropocentric power structures by incorporating nonhuman perspectives, redefining politics within multispecies frameworks, and exploring the implications of cohabitation and interdependence;
- propose decolonial, pluriversal, and inclusive governance and decision-making approaches that accommodate multispecies configurations;
- investigate care, resistance, and subversion within more-than-human politics, particularly in addressing social and ecological injustices;
- examine the influence of artificial intelligence on more-than-human relationships and political landscapes;
- highlight design-driven methods and investigations as political acts capable of regulating and fos-

tering interdependent co-living, shaping materialities, and engaging with diverse epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies, and relational practices.

We encourage submissions across design, HCI, philosophy, and STS, aiming to cultivate a transdisciplinary dialogue.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 182 - More-than-Human Politics: Designing for Multispecies Cultures in Insect Biorefineries

Cecilia Padula, Politecnico di Torino

Keywords: Multispecies worlding, capabilities analysis, prototype democracies, multispecies cultures, systemic design

The New Climatic Regime forces political obsolescence, demanding a redefinition of development to address entrenched anthropocentric power structures. The more-than-human expands our understanding of the multiple, hybrid entanglements that make up our world. In this medianaturecultural continuum, technology plays a pivotal role in mediating human-nonhuman relations as a morally neutral tool whose use is inherently shaped by power structures. As designers increasingly recognise the political nature of their work, it becomes evident that design is not neutral but actively shapes dynamics in technology use.

Within the design for sustainability framework, systemic design emerges as the most promising way to steer socio-technical systems towards sustainable development. However, in striving for pluralism, systemic design often reinforces existing power dynamics within socio-technical systems. Tools such as Gigamaps, designed to illustrate complex systems, frequently overlook the realities of marginalised human and nonhuman entities. This highlights the need for systemic design to critically evaluate its practices and overcome its "ontological blindness."

This study addresses the urgent need to integrate nonhuman agencies into Insect Biorefinery (IB) organisations, challenging speciesist norms prioritising human (and mammals) interests. While often lauded for sustainability, current IB value logics perpetuates anthropocentric paradigms by overlooking nonhuman entities' ecological and cultural role, particularly insects.

Expanding systemic design principles toward "becoming with" nonhumans, the study explores the capabilities of Black Soldier Flies (BSFs) as active participants within IB organisations. Through collaborative autoethnography, situated human knowledge is articulated collectively by often subjugated local stakeholders. Additionally, multispecies approaches like multispecies worlding and capabilities analysis explore the lived experiences and cultural needs of BSFs within IB organisations.

The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative tools, including prototyping environmental enrichment for BSFs' artificial habitats and decision-making frameworks like the Choquet integral to evaluate competing potential value logics.

This empirical study challenges speciesist approaches to breeding technologies, reconfiguring human-nonhuman relations in IB. It extends discourses on multispecies democracies and interdependence while positioning designers as mediators and activists who can foster inclusive innovation and address power imbalances in IB organisations. Although power imbalances persist, the research promotes caring relationships that reduce nonhuman suffering and encourage collaborative, equitable interactions.

Central contributions include identifying multispecies and autobiographical approaches to challenge speciesist narratives in socio-technical systems, developing a framework for co-designing multispecies cultures, and synthesising and ranking designs for democratic IB.

Focusing on the man-technology-fly assemblage enables a process of "becoming minoritarian", as described by Deleuze and Guattari, where the rigid, hierarchical identity separating humans from nonhumans is dismantled. This de-subjectification promotes relational ethics that extend beyond anthropomorphism,

encouraging emotional exchange and collaboration. Democratic technology use creates new flows of forces, perceptions, and emotions. This challenges human dominance and opens up possibilities for multispecies collaboration in IB.

However, this effort remains vulnerable to becoming isolated and avoiding systemic violence within the productive imperative. The findings call for continued reflection and critical engagement with the political dimensions of design. Designers must actively question the ontological assumptions shaping human-non-human relations and participate in transforming power dynamics within technological systems.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 204 - Counter-Designing: Prototyping in a More-Than-Human Planet

Pablo Hermansen, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Martín Tironi, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Keywords: Counter-Designing, Planet-Oriented Design, Maraña, More-than-Human Prototyping, Ch'ixi.

In this presentation, we introduce our forthcoming book Counter-Designing: Prototyping in a More-Than-Human Planet, which proposes a critical, Latin American–rooted approach to design that counters the anthropocentric ideals entrenched in modern-capitalist paradigms. Drawing on over a decade of collaborative research and site-based interventions, we conceptualize "counter-designing" as an active dismantling of extractivist, dualistic, and technocratic frameworks that reduce non-humans to passive resources and traditional communities to mere background contexts. Instead, we argue that design must embrace the socio-environmental marañas – the dense entanglements of humans, other-than-human agents, and ecological forces – characterising the realities of Latin America and, increasingly, the planet as a whole.

Taking inspiration from Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's work on Ch'ixinakax utxiwa and Afro-descendant struggles such as Francia Márquez's concept of Vivir Sabroso, we situate design as a practice of relational world-making oriented toward collective well-being and cultural-ecological resilience. Vivir Sabroso (Living Joyfully and Harmoniously) underscores how joy and mutual care in everyday life serve as acts of resistance to colonial and capitalist logics – a stance we see as vital for reinvigorating design education and professional practice. Through more-than-human prototyping, we propose design interventions that foster meaningful collaborations with non-human entities – rivers, plants, microorganisms – refusing to treat them as mere inputs or inert matter. In so doing, we aim to cultivate designs that privilege coexistence, reciprocity, and the expansion of multispecies alliances.

By examining specific Latin American case studies – ranging from reforestation projects driven by community knowledge, to urban initiatives that integrate Indigenous or Afro-descendant epistemologies – we spotlight how counter-designing can serve as a transformative force against socio-ecological precarity. Critically, this book does not merely critique dominant regimes of knowledge production; it offers practical, methodological insights for designers, researchers, and activists who wish to reconfigure the politics of relating in more-than-human contexts.

Our presentation at STS Italia's "More-than-just-human politics of relating" session will articulate how counter-designing intersects with Science and Technology Studies. We show how a Latin American vantage point unsettles universalized design principles, bringing attention to the ecological and cultural specificities often obscured by mainstream design discourses. Grounded in feminist, decolonial, and posthuman traditions, our work reframes design as an ethical and political act of "making-with," rather than an instrumental act of problem-solving or product creation.

Ultimately, Counter-Designing invites STS scholars to engage with design as a site of contestation and care, where forging new modes of inter-species solidarity and planetary responsibility becomes both feasible and urgently necessary. We look forward to discussing how this perspective enriches ongoing debates on more-than-human politics, decolonial futures, and the reshaping of design's horizons.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 234 - The Embassy of Reindeers

Laura Boffi, Spirited Design Office

Keywords: Reindeer husbandry, co-existance, remote sensing, participatory design.

The "Embassy of Reindeers" project has been inspired by a fieldwork period in Lapland, where the author spent several weeks with a few herders of the Muonion Paliskunta. It is an independent work-in-progress.

"The Embassy of Reindeers" is about getting the reindeers point of view about pasture conditions due to land use and climate change. Land use is meant from both sides: land used by the grazing reindeers and by other humans, responsible of cutting out forests and building infrastructures or industrial plants. Getting the reindeers point of view means taking pictures from reindeers when they perform 2 specific grazing behaviours: eating from the ground or digging in the snow to find food. This can be achieved combining movements data from an accelerometer with a reindeer-borne camera pointing to the soil, which get triggered by specific foraging behaviours. The pictures will be collected onto an online platform, which would stand as the online instance of the Embassy. The herders will be the one charged (and entitled) to describe the pictures as reindeer ambassadors: "the herders think as reindeers", this is something I learnt during my previous fieldwork. By showing the reindeers point of view pictures, the author wants to bring on the table the objective view of the non-humans and try to raise awareness on pasture degradation.

The creation of a fictional "Embassy" can allow to restore a territory which is real, yet split into different districts, through an online presence, where reindeers are not divided into administrative territories and herders can come together as a herd giving voice to their animals and raising husbandry issues in front of local administrators and policy makers. Therefore, the online platform of "The Embassy of Reindeers" will work as an alternative political tool for reindeer herders. "The Embassy of Reindeers" project will offer a transformation strategy and innovation process for the revitalisation of mountainous and peripheral areas by adding the point of view of the non-humans (the reindeers) into the picture and offering herders a new way to partner with their herds and amplify their voice in front of local administrators and policy makers. On the other way around, herders themselves could gain new insights on the land they use and the pasture degradation that they also may cause by looking at the pictures taken by their reindeers.

The final aim of "The Embassy of Reindeers" is to be a tool informing local policy making and herding activity, a tool which looks at reindeer herding as if "we would start all over again" , citing local herder Pekka, a participant of my previous fieldwork, and through which we would carefully attend to the entanglements among the reindeers, the environment and the humans and how they might change over time.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 302 - From Canals to the Cosmos: Refracting the More-Than-Human Politics of Flooding

Kathrin Eitel, Universität Zürich

Keywords: Refraction, More-than-human politics, Plants, Robots, Sattelite, urban cohabitation

What do a water hyacinth, a satellite, and subterranean tunnel robots have in common? They are all entangled in a more-than-human urban politics – particularly in the flood-prone metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. While the city pushes forward its flood adaptation strategies through innovative solutions like the implementation of "sponge city" concepts, a green carpet of water hyacinths obstructs drainage by clogging canals. At the same time, digitized predictive models on Google Maps visualize an impending flood, while U.S.-manufactured robots search for so-called "death holes" – subterranean voids that could potentially cause parts of the city to collapse.

In this presentation, I explore how these entities co-constitute the city's material and political landscapes, shape infrastructures, and influence governance structures – challenging anthropocentric urban imagi-

naries in the process. Examining the relationships between these heterogeneous assemblages revolving around urban flooding, I argue that a more-than-human politics of relating involves more than just engaging with visible interferences or diffractive patterns. It must also engage with patterns of refraction, which reveal the powerful politics of relations.

A diffractive ethnography studies how phenomena break and reform – like waves encountering an obstacle and continuing in altered patterns. It analyzes the effects of such movements (diffraction), for instance, when dominant imaginaries of flood management collide with the material presence, spread, and ecological agency of water hyacinths, reshaping governance (Barad 2007). However, a diffractive perspective alone may be complemented by looking on how something fractures (cf. Tsing 2015) – how fault lines and lines of flight emerge, creating sites where structures dissolve, distort, or fold and reveal new, unexpected relations (Tsing 2015; Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Refractions highlight the ways power is bent and how other-than-humans shift urban politics in times of climate crisis. What temporal and spatial continuities shape these moments of fracture?

What power dynamics drive these ruptures? Satellites, for instance, may predict flood risks, yet they often exclude or reframe local knowledge of flood-prone zones, generating distortions in whose priorities are represented in climate adaptation efforts.

This presentation focuses on the ecologies of these moments of transformation, asking how they unfold and examining their refractive effects on how the city is done, how it is envisioned and planned. The goal is not merely to map the effects of these differences but also to understand the transformative moments – when something becomes new or collapses – by immersing in the temporal and spatial complexity of these processes (Deleuze 1993). A robot from the U.S. does not merely function as a technical solution; it also refracts (bends and shifts) political relations – evoking associations with imperial interventions or military surveillance when deployed in sewage systems. Similarly, the presence of water hyacinths in the city's canals is not simply an ecological phenomenon but a complex entanglement of colonial trade routes, global markets, and local conceptions of nature, value, and control.

By employing refractions as moments of transformation in a more-than-human flood-prone city, we can understand urban spaces not merely as technopolitical arenas but as dynamic sites of more-than-human relations – where infrastructures, ecological actors, and technological systems are continually refracting, breaking, and refolding within ever-changing relational configurations.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 450 - A New Class of Artefact? Hybridity and Material Agency in Biorobotics

Beren Sekerci, University of Edinburgh

Keywords: biorobotics, life-on-the-border-entities, hybridity, material agency, synthetic biology, human-machine collaborations, in-betweenness

This paper looks at the concepts of hybridity and material agency in biorobotics, a field that has been unexplored in STS. The field of biorobotics incorporates principles from synthetic biology, robotics, and AI to design 'living robots,' also known as Xenobots. Imaginaries of hybridity are prominent in the field, as biorobots exist within the hybrid interface of organic living material and inorganic components while being neither fully living nor fully robotic, designed by AI and humans.

The paper explores the concept of hybridity by examining the limits of artificial and natural entities, as well as the extent to which they are increasingly overlapping in contemporary science. By drawing on biorobotics, I aim to ask how binaries such as culture and nature in the life sciences are being challenged and how new artefacts created in the future may further challenge the traditional boundaries of being.

By conducting ethnographic work to explore how scientists work with agential living materials in their laboratories, I investigate questions of to what extent the field is pushing traditional boundaries of existing

knowledge and what this means for the future of human-machine and human-more-than-human collaborations.

Particularly, I showcase how biorobotics' conception of agency is constructed in opposition to previous domains such as synthetic biology. In doing so, biorobotics opens a debate about new forms of agency that are still in the making. My work draws on prior STS work done on synthetic biology (Calvert and Szymanski, 2020), cybernetics (Hayles, 2008), and cyborgs (Haraway, 1991). I show how biorobotics opens up debate arenas about new forms of agency that is still in the making, because biorobotics researchers attempt to create programmable and adaptable machines that possess their own agency. This raises the question of whether the human designer of the organism has to give away some of their agency to attain better design and scientific knowledge.

I further explore whether biorobotics can create a landscape of collaboration between the machine, the living robot, and the scientist. By giving some of their agency to the active living material they are designing with, could scientists attain a form of care for the 'new artefact' they are creating? In this presentation, I conceptualise the emergence of material agency and bio-hybridity as useful frameworks to make sense of these sociotechnical practices and discover whether the emphasis on material agency could lead to good technoscience practices. I end by asking what biological agency does to human and machine expertise and whether the knowledge practices in biorobotics could let us explore concepts about diverse multispecies perspectives.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 472 - Above all that is below: The politics of the invisible

Cristina Sanuy Hereter, Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya
Manuela Valtchanova, Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya
Roger Paez, Elisava, Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya

Keywords: Bioacoustic sensors, Acoustic cartography, Invisible fauna, Multispecies urbanism, Tracking ethics

Sensing technologies are reshaping how cities understand and interact with their ecosystems. By uncovering hidden spaces – from sewers to rooftop gardens – these technologies offer a look into urban life that has long been missed. This project explores the ethical, engineering, and design challenges of using technology to study the often-invisible species inhabiting our cities. Drawing from a case study in Barcelona, where acoustic mapping and robotic sensing systems are integrated, this research investigates how these technologies reveal the movements and presence of hidden urban species.

The study highlights a critical issue: the invisibility of these species is often rooted in human prejudice, particularly our fear or disgust towards certain animals. Urban species like rats and insects are stigmatized, and our tendency to avoid or ignore them has led to their marginalisation in city planning. Technology offers an opportunity to challenge this exclusion and confront the biases that have shaped our urban spaces. However, making these hidden species visible raises key ethical questions. Does revealing them help their protection, or does it expose them to greater risks? Who owns the data these technologies collect, and how might it influence urban policies? Furthermore, what role should technology play in fostering coexistence between humans and non-human species in urban environments?

While the tracking and categorisation of bioacoustic signals is achieved in a non-invasive manner, the technology remains shaped by an anthropocentric framework. Despite efforts to uncover neglected urban life, the project is still rooted in human priorities. While tracking can make the invisible visible, it cannot entirely free itself from the human lens through which these species are perceived. The use of sensors to monitor these animals prompts us to reconsider how cities can be optimized for both human and wildlife needs, revealing our own biases in the process.

Technologies like the Cocktail Party effect are used in this project to categorize and track sounds from

various species, creating sound cartographies that link humans and other-than-human. This approach challenges us to rethink how we design urban spaces, pushing for an urbanism that acknowledges multispecies coexistence. Robotics raises broader questions about non-human entities in urban ecosystems. Traditionally viewed as human-made tools, robots might also be seen as participants in the city, contributing to the ecological system in their own right. Should we consider robots merely as instruments, or can they be regarded as a new "species" influencing the spaces they occupy?

This study argues that technology should not be limited to gathering data or optimising cities for human needs alone. These technologies can also help prologue a conscious multispecies coexistence, enabling urban spaces that accommodate both human and non-human life, questioning how and why we make the invisible visible.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 475 - Seeds++: a design exploration of regenerative soil practices for interspecies care

Annarita Bianco, Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

Keywords: soil care, interspecies care, more-than-human design, regenerative design, wearables

In recent decades, market-driven logic has increasingly shaped self-care, leading to its simplification and commodification (Fragnito & Tola, 2021, p.19). Personal well-being has been reduced to individualistic practices, the purchase of exclusive lifestyle products (The Care Collective, 2020, p.26), and technological devices for tracking biological parameters. This narrow perspective reinforces ideals of self-sufficiency, autonomy, and independence, promoting an anthropocentric view that ignores our fundamental dependence on other living and non-living entities, organic matter, and biochemical processes that connect us to planetary systems. In contrast, the intersection of ecology, feminism, and post-anthropocentrism (Adams & Gruen, 2022; Braidotti, 2017; Haraway, 2018; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) points to the need to rethink capitalist models, hierarchical structures, and dualistic ontologies that have reinforced environmental and social injustices. Design, too, must evolve, embracing cooperative and symbiotic approaches, fostering interspecies care practices that support the well-being of human and non-human life forms, as well as technological assemblages. In this light, care transforms into a radical act, one that can carry political significance.

This contribution presents key design outcomes from an ongoing research project that brings together Research through Design (Redström, 2017) with autobiographical and autoethnographic approaches informed by Soma Design (Höök, 2018). The research investigates mutual care relationships between humans and the multispecies communities within soil, leading to the creation of artefacts that acknowledge the subject's embeddedness within a more-than-human milieu. Soil's essence lies in relationality – it is a complex, living system where organisms interact through regenerative cycles and biochemical exchanges. As one of the planet's most vital biotypes, soil is essential for food and material production, yet it remains a neglected, non-renewable resource. Its fragile balance is increasingly threatened by intensive agriculture, extractivist practices, and climate change, which undermine its regenerative capacity.

As part of this discussion, participants will engage with prototypes from the ongoing Seeds++ series, identifying key strengths, challenges, and future directions for the research. These prototypes aim to foster a collective and systemic approach to interspecies responsibility, bonding somatic awareness with soil care through collective practices. The designed modules, developed in various materials, serve three key functions:

- Soil Booster – restoring soil health through the decomposition of nutrient-embedded materials;
- Compost Tracker – facilitating shared and collective composting practices;
- Edible Element – emphasising the deep entanglement between body and soil.

The first type consists of 3D-printed, compostable shells, designed to host yeasts and bacterial consortia

that enhance soil quality. The second includes data-sharing modules that enable local farmers practising symbiotic agriculture to exchange soil health information. This community-driven approach allows farmers to learn from one another, share best practices, and collectively contribute to a more resilient food system.

Finally, the edible modules serve as nutritional supplements containing key nutrients shared by both the human body and soil, promoting gut health and reinforcing the deep interconnection between human and environmental well-being.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 509 - Towards A Politics of Disidentification in Human-AI Entanglements

Grace Turtle, Technische Universiteit Delft
Elisa Giaccardi, Politecnico di Milano
Roy Bendor, Technische Universiteit Delft

Keywords: Human-AI entanglements, disidentifications, more-than-human design

In its current state, technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) are designed to make the world more effectively computable (Finn, 2018). Yet, when AI relies on the stability computable entities, questions of identification become pressing: when AI works to recursively stabilize bodies and worlds, even as we recognize entities to be fluid (Butler, 2011).

The autotheoretical experiment in sonic modelling at Fundación Organizmo, Tenjo, Colombia, titled Sounding Territories challenges this assumption by asking: How might processes of identification in human-AI entanglements emerge through affective relations rather than conventional computational encodings – such as labelling, classification, and categorisation – that impose fixed forms of identity? The experiment proposes that the identification of something new first requires a process of disidentification, the act of "constantly disidentifying, to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly line up" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 78-79).

In Sounding Territories, a performer and the audience engage in deep listening while interacting with a sonic model encoded with entities like water, fire, and bees. Using gestures, the performer disturbs and disrupts familiar expressions of these sounds, transforming them in ways that challenge traditional algorithmic encodings of identification and sound categorisation in the model's latent space. The performer experiences disidentification through their embodied, affective relations with the model. As they interact, they experience a shift in identity, feeling their sense of self merge with the more-than-human sounds they create. As illustrated in Figure 1, the performer described this experience as one where the boundaries between their body and the more-than-human sounds produced through their movements blurred. These interactions, entangled within the model's latent space, resist stable or fixed identifications, allowing instead for fluid and evolving becoming.

This process of disidentification is inherently political – more precisely, a "performance of politics" (Muñoz, 1999). Positioned within postcolonial systems of oppression, AI today relies on stable data subjects and fixed identities to enable predictability (e.g., resource exploitation), control (e.g., surveillance), and, ultimately, monetisation (e.g., targeted advertising), all reinforcing existing power asymmetries (Amaro, 2022). In contrast, Sounding Territories disrupts this paradigm by foregrounding relational unfolding (Glissant, 1990) and the mechanisms of disidentification that enable it.

In the more-than-(just)-human politics of relating explored in this experiment, we consider disidentifications as "emergent identities-in-difference" (Muñoz, 1999, p.7) that unsettle human-centered perspectives, resist the commodification of identity, and open up possibilities for more-than-(just)-human ways of being. This, in turn, invites probabilistic design spaces for engaging with "being uncertain" (Giaccardi et al. 2024) – spaces that values indeterminacy and multiplicity over control and prediction, where futures and by extension one's sense of futurity co-emerge (Turtle & Bendor, 2024; Turtle et al., 2024).

A politics of disidentification in human-AI entanglements offers a space for experimentation with imaginative and critical perspectives on the formation of the relational subject, contributing to discussions in more-than-human design and technology, human-computer interaction (HCI), and STS more broadly.

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 769 - Ghostly matters: Institutional response-ability and the digital life of human remains

Valeria Borsotti, Københavns Universitet

Keywords: human remains, digitisation, HCI, CSCW, hauntology

"To address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future)." (Karen Barad 2010)

This contribution explores the complexities of digitising human remains, which have been discussed in bioarcheology as "complex categories" of objects – both objects of science and physical manifestations of lived lives (Nilsson Stutz 2023). My exploration draws on autoethnographic research at a medical museum in Scandinavia, as well as on interviews with experts working with human remains worldwide (primarily in anatomical and osteological collections).

Human remains, also referred to as "human material" by conservators in medical museums, blur binary juxtapositions of object/subject and human/non-human. They are what is left of the dead, but also undeniably "vibrant matter" (Bennett 2010), not least when colonialism and scientific racism are hauntologically coming through the materialities of the collections and their metadata. This creates ethical conundrums on access to records and how to communicate issues of structural violence in scientific production. The intersection of themes related to death and technology has been relatively overlooked in HCI and CSCW, though there is increasing attention to the subject. In this study I look at the interactions and interdependencies at play when designing (or adapting) digital heritage systems to archive and access human remains.

In this presentation I will discuss some preliminary results from this work-in-progress study exploring how digital catalogues of human remains are collaboratively produced through situated sociomaterial practices and shaped by multiple dimensions – policies, politics, advocacy, institutional governance, and technical systems. I show how multiple actors cultivate response-ability (Haraway 2016), sometimes by leveraging collectives and community feedback.

References:

Barad, K. (2010). Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come. Derrida Today, 3(2), 240–268. https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2010.0206

Bennett, J. (2010). Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things. Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. (2016). Staying with the Trouble. Duke University Press; JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw25q

Nilsson Stutz, L. (2023). Between objects of science and lived lives. The legal liminality of old human remains in museums and research. International Journal of Heritage Studies, 29(10), 1061–1074."

12 JUNE 2025 14.00 - 17.00

ID 830 - The Horse-Human Relation in Motion: How mobile ontologies of horse-human-land relationality can move us towards Multispecies Justice

Denise Regina Percequillo Hossom, Gonzaga University

Keywords: multispecies, mobility justice, animal colonialism, classification, more-than-human

What can horses tell us about mobility justice and more-than-human mobile ontologies as a matter for multispecies justice (Sheller 2018; Chao, Bolender, Kirksey 2022)? I explore the possible answers to such a question through engagement with environmental policy and management practices for "free roaming" horse populations within the United States ("mustangs") and Australia ("brumbies"), and transnationally across the Eurasian steppe (Przewalski horse). These horses tell stories of longstanding conflicts between diverse interest holders (human and more-than-human) "in motion". A more-than-human mobile ontology is essential to addressing social, ethical, epistemic, and political injustices in horse-human-land relationality as a matter of decolonising environmental policy. Through considering Kincentric ecology (Salmón 2000) and Diné (Navajo) horsemanship (John 2019) as relational accounts of horse-human kinship, the contrasting coloniality of technobureaucratic managerial practices traces the contours of conflicts between horse cultures. A landscape of intersecting human and more-than-human lines of mobility appears, and the formation of trading zones is helpful in describing how relations are formed amongst diverse horse cultures across contexts (Galison 1997).

Whether it is equine welfare advocates arguing against governmentally administrated horse culling practices, conservation biologists tracking populations of free-roaming horses as "reintroduced" or "rewilded" species, ecologists warning of the impacts of horse populations on fragile soil ecosystems, or horses making their place in conflict known by their very movement and presence into sites of violence (Przewalski horses in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone during the Russian-Ukrainian War), a common thread to how horses are entangled in conflict is the role of technoscientific classificatory practices. Horse classification revolves around a set of four conceptual categories: "wild", "feral", "domestic", and "tame". I collectively term these four concepts the "Wild-Domestic Distinction" - WDD), which serves as a nexus to narrative framings common to all horses examined in this case study; I term these "wild horse problems" (WHP) narratives.

WDD classification of horses operates as a "spatiotemporal segmentation of the world… a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work - bureaucratic or knowledge production" (Bowker & Star 1999, 10). The WDD as a technoscientific classification system supports generally accepted narratives in scientific practice that categorize "wildness", "domestication", "ferality" and "tameness" in ways which embed particular materialities and ontologies of horses and humans. Classification of horses and horse-human relations within environmental policy and conservation biology is further driven by technobureaucratic aims of "management" perspectives, especially with respect to "land use" (Michaels 2018). This classification system requires wading into interspecies and multispecies materialities, histories, and epistemologies of injustice, violence, oppression, silencing, and the manifestations of a modern colonial world system (Maldonado-Torres 2016). Kelsey Dayle John articulates how horses show the full force of "animal colonialism" as "one interlocking tension that strikes upon conversations of heteropatriarchy, racism, environmental racism, Indigenous erasure, and religious fundamentalism – all forces that connect, intersect, and overlap in complex ways" (2019, 42). Reexamining the WDD offers fruitful pathways towards decolonising horse-human-land relations through advancing mobility justice and mobile ontologies in support of multispecies justice.