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Editorial: Ethics in/of/for design

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Abstract: As a Special Interest Group, we frame design ethics as an *invitation to care* and argue against reducing it to a methodology, framework, checklist, toolkit, or an afterthought. This broad framing highlights that 'ethics' can carry multiple meanings in different contexts and can be approached from various theoretical perspectives. Consequently, this track addresses the need for a *nuanced* and *reflexive* discussion on how ethics and design are intertwined. Our track attracted 44 submissions, 17 of which have been accepted through a double-blind peer-review process. We clustered these submissions according to the three main themes in our track title: Ethics in / of / for Design. Most of the submissions help address the question: *How to nurture ethical awareness and accountability in design practices?* Together, these submissions stimulate looking back with critical historical awareness, while also looking forward with cautious optimism.

Keywords: design ethics; responsible design; design methods; relational design

1. Introduction

Ethics has regained scholarly traction in design research as the discipline expands its scope to help address social issues (e.g. social design, systemic design) and to stimulate responsible design and technological innovation. As a Special Interest Group on Design Ethics (SIG DE), we frame design ethics as an *invitation to care* and argue against reducing it to a single methodology, framework, checklist, toolkit, or an afterthought that can be added onto design processes (Ozkaramanli et al, 2022). This broad framing acknowledges that 'design ethics' carry multiple meanings depending on the context, such as sensitivity towards moral values, democratization, or critical thinking. For instance, Value Sensitive Design (Friedman and Hendry, 2019) and Design for Values (van de Poel, 2020) are a family of methods that trigger discussions around human values (e.g., autonomy, justice) in technology design and development. Moreover, Participatory Design, as envisioned by Björgvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren, aims for democratic spaces where design interventions are co-created with participants,

which also surfaces differences and helps form new social relations as implied by agonistic democracy (Björgvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren, 2010). Finally, critical and speculative design practices (e.g., Dunne and Raby, 2013) see design as socially constructed, and thus, subject it to critique expressed through the materiality of artefacts. This is intertwined with the politics of design and underpin ethically charged movements such as decolonizing design (see also the track of the Pluriversal SIG). These multiple meanings of 'ethical' imply that the ethics of design can benefit from multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives that await systematic scholarly attention.

In line with this multidimensional nature of the topic, we recognize a need to engage with *nuanced* and *reflexive* discussions on how ethics and design are intertwined. Nuance is important to help design move beyond a subjective, opinion-based discourse around ethics, which often involve questions such as *would you design a gun? Would you stop working for a corporation that doesn't care (enough) about climate change?* While such provocative questions can create lively discussions in academic or non-academic settings, we anticipate a risk in that they may limit ethics to a practice that is vaguely informed by subjective moralities[1] as opposed to a knowledge domain grounded in scholarly discourse and a solid body of literature. In addition, reflexivity is important in building this knowledge domain as it can help unpack the ethical dimensions of day-to-day design practices and stimulate a search for theories and methods that can help re-interpret and re-orient them (e.g., from cultural studies, design histories, critical theories, future studies).

To achieve this discussion at DRS 2024, we invited both theoretical papers that unpack distinct conceptual lenses (e.g. feminism, decoloniality, political philosophy, and aesthetics of design) and practice-based explorations (e.g. in communities, public and private organizations, law and policy circles) to ground theory. Specifically, we invited submissions that are inspired by the following themes and questions:

- Responsible design and innovation: What are the ethical and societal implications of design for innovation (processes, strategies, artefacts)? How to nurture an ethical awareness and accountability in design and innovation practices?

- The ethics of collaboration: What are the main questions concerning power, agency, and positionality that design should recognize and address in inter/transdisciplinary settings?

- Ethics in education: How to embed critical-ethical reflection in design education?

- Aesthetics of design: How do the value-laden imagery of design shape our perception of the world? What does this aesthetics say about design as a discipline?

- Ethics for social and climate justice: What is the role of design in preventing/perpetuating social inequalities and the exploitation of natural resources?

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[1] Morality here refers to norms and values put forward by a society or a particular group (e.g., religion), or accepted by an individual for his or her own behavior.

Our track attracted 44 submissions, all of which were reviewed within this track, and 17 have been accepted to the conference through a double-blind peer-review process. We clustered these submissions according to the three main themes that are implied in our track title: Ethics in / of / for Design. These themes are inspired by the seminal work of scholars who reflected on the relationship between *research* and *design*, such as Buchanan (2007), Frayling (1993), and Archer (1995) (see Michel, 2007 for an overview). We see three similarities between the discussion on the nature of design research and that on design ethics. First, similar to how 'design' and 'research' seem to be agnostic terms, with the former focused on *intervening in the world* and the latter on *understanding the world*; 'design' and 'ethics' may be at odds with each other, since the creative, problem-solving tendencies of design may conflict with the reflective, problematizing mindset required by ethical reasoning. This is not to say that the two cannot be productively reconciled (as we will see later in the analysis of the submissions). Second, the discussion on the nature of design research coincides with the formalisation of design as a discipline and profession (Michel, 2007). Similarly, the discussion on the entanglement of design and ethics coincides with the expansion of this formalisation to new fronts such as social design, systemic design, and the role of design in transdisciplinary settings. Both developments exhibit a certain destabilisation of the discipline before moving forward. Third, both discussions are in essence a call for theories and methodological re-orientations that come from within the discipline (vs. being imposed by other discipline's understanding of what 'science' or 'ethics' might be). With this clarification, we now move onto a short reflection on the accepted submissions in our track.

In what follows, we present preliminary insights from the accepted submissions. In the rest of this editorial, we will refer to the paper numbers listed below in alphabetical order per session[2]:

Ethics of Design: Theories and Methods
1. Quant-Ethico: An approach to quantifying and interpreting ethical decision making by Shruthi Sai Chivukula; Colin M. Gray
2. Head and heart — An ethical tightrope by Anjuli Muller; Anna Brown
3. Navigating ethics-informed methods at the intersection of design and philosophy of technology by Deger Ozkaramanli, Merlijn Smits, Maaike Harbers, Gabriele Ferri, Michael Nagenborg, Ibo van de Poel
4. Situating Imaginaries of ethics in / of / through design by Sonja Rattay; Marco C. Rozendaal; Irina Shklovski
5. Past, present and future of design ethics by Helle Vesti; Linda N. Laursen; Christian Tollestrup

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[2] Admittedly, some of the papers could fit under more than one session theme. Here, we had to consider practical limitations such as having approximately an equal number of papers in each session.

Ethics in Design: Practices

6. Envisioning transformation structures to support ethical mediation practices by Shruthi Sai Chivukula; Colin M. Gray

7. Communicating the use of generative AI to design students: Fostering ethics rather than teaching it by Jeffrey C. F. Ho

8. With great power comes great responsibility: The discourse of conduct and ethics in professional design by Veronika Kelly; Meghan Kelly

9. Gender code – a narrative ethical glance at women developers in finnish information technology by Aila Johanna Kronqvist; Rebekah Rousi

10. Design anthropology for ethics of care and emergence: Reflections from an energy transition project by Gijs van Leeuwen; Abhigyan Singh

11. Trauma responsiveness by design: Towards an ethic of care and accountability in design research by Sarah Fathallah; Verónica Caridad Rabelo

Ethics for Design: Positions and Relations

12. Relationality in design: What can be understood? By Isaac Arturo Ortega Alvarado

13. Thought experiments in the ethics of designing for future people by Peter Buwert; Matt Sinclair

14. Speculative ethics, design, philosophy & education by Wouter Eggink

15. Dialogic Design: Participating ethically moment-to-moment by Victoria Helen Gerrard

16. The space between procedural and situated ethics: Reflecting on the use of existing materials in design research on children affected by stroke by Pleuntje Jellema; Piet Tutenel; Birgit Moser; Anne-Sophie Schoss; Maja Kevdzija; Andrea Jelić; Ann Heylighen

17. Cultivating future-oriented responsibility in design with care by Irem Tekogul, Laura Forlano

2. Ethics of Design: Theories and Methods

The Ethics of Design session consists of papers adopt a bird's-eye view on design as a discipline and profession. These papers are either inspired by existing interdisciplinary theories, use original methods, or they inspire new theory and method development. In that sense, they contribute to the growing body of literature on design ethics that originate from within the discipline and/or they offer interdisciplinary pathways for thinking about the ethics of design.

Paper #5 offers a structured literature review on the themes that have so far been researched in design ethics and propose eight central topics: Design processes and practices, design education, participatory/co-creation, responsible design, social design, sustainability, technology, and human-centred design. The authors end with a long list of questions, which are of both theoretical and practical in nature, that await scholarly attention.

Paper #3 proposes a preliminary typology, or what authors call a conversation tool, that may help design and philosophy of technology researchers collaborate through comparing and negotiating methods and approaches from their respective fields. To facilitate this interdisciplinary methodological conversation, they map a selection of methods and approaches from both fields along two main dimensions: assessment to accompaniment and theory-grounded approaches to theoretically flexible techniques. Similar to paper #3, paper #1 also adopts a methodological focus and lays the groundwork for new mixed methods to unpacking the ethical complexity of design activities. This quantitative approach complements existing qualitative frameworks for studying ethical decision making and its implementation is illustrated through a concrete lab protocol study on redesigning the donation experience on the website of a charity. In addition to its methodological contribution, this paper proposes four ethics-focused roles for designers: Ethical Inverter, Ethico-Gemini, Users' Advocate, Stakeholders' Pet.

Similar to paper #3, paper #4 adopts an interdisciplinary perspective between design, STS, and CSCW and introduce the concept of socio-technical imaginaries to design practices. Authors define sociotechnical imaginaries as: *"interpretations of reality and potential futures shared by many people"* (p.2) and argue that explicating these interpretations in dealing with social and cultural values is essential to understanding how designers and stakeholders engage with ethics. For this, they propose three perspectives on how sociotechnical imaginaries of technology pre-frame how designers engage with values and ethics in their work: for *whom* to design, *what* is designed, and *how* to design.

Finally, paper #2 turns our attention to ethical dilemmas experienced during participatory research and design processes and introduces and 'ethics of care' perspective. For this, they contrast highly bureaucratic ethical approval processes that often consider researchers 'in the lead' (i.e., ethics of the head) with the dynamic nature of ethical issues that arise in participatory research (i.e., the ethics of the heart). The authors argue for balancing the 'head' and 'heart' and introduce concrete ways to integrate an ethics of care approach to participatory research.

In summary, the papers in this session contribute to the literature on the ethics of design through new research questions and methodologies, tools for interdisciplinary collaboration, or inspiring constructs (e.g., sociotechnical imaginaries or care) to reveal the often hidden ethical and political dimensions of value work done by designers.

3. Ethics in Design: Practices

The Ethics in Design session consists of papers that propose methods, tools, and strategies to deal with ethical questions and moral dilemmas that arise in design practices in non-academic settings, practice-based research projects or in educational practices. The common analytical focus is on actions and practices when engaging with communities, stakeholders, or individuals.

For instance, paper #6 proposes a method for integrating ethical actions, framed as something straightforward and procedural, and ethical responsibility, framed as something that influences the practice. This approach generates a modular library that regulates actions and integrates diverse perspectives on ethical mediation. Focusing on responsibility, paper #8 proposes a code of conduct that divides actions in aspirational and in need of accountability, i.e., those that should be overseen by a governance. More specifically related to working dynamics, paper #9 discusses the role of female workers in the IT industry, and how this is influenced by gender. This angle aims to show how ethical etiquettes are needed within the discipline to liaise working relations. Paper #11 proposes a framework for the design practice grounded in care, which guides the way design approaches its practice. The framework formalises this through policies that could develop a protocol to ensure care is pursued across practice. Aligned to a similar position, paper #10 discusses the value of the relations between design and its community as means for promoting kinship, care and belonging. In this paper, relationality is a vehicle for engaging designers in reflecting on how these connections should be approached. Paper #7 turns our attention to educational practices in design and argues for a argues for integrating an understanding of students' identity when examining the ethical aspects of using GenAI in education. Drawing an analogy between using GenAI and leveraging other designers' work, the author argues that students should acknowledge and disclose how they benefit from GenAI in line with their self-driven learning goals.

Overall, this collection of papers reminds us that design practices have an inherent social dimension, and for this reason, they demand ethical guidance that design practitioners can benefit from in understanding and responding to social issues. Currently, the way social responsibility is enacted varies. For instance, procedural approaches look at everyday routines and how these can include more ethical thinking in the decision–making. Authors propose that governance approaches might be needed for overseeing actions in terms of accountability in order to generate long–term regulations for integrating ethics in day-to-day practices. The focus on relationality raises attention on the actual means with which design practices engage with communities. Finally, being prone to failure, authors suggest embracing the concept of care to address the possible challenges that the discipline faces when relating to society.

4. Ethics for Design: Positions and Relations

The Ethics for Design session explores a diversity of positions and relations on how ethics may be conceptualized as input for design processes.

Paper #12 directly focuses on the concept of 'relationality' and proposes three perspectives for understanding the relations between designers and stakeholders, namely a utilitarian, communitarian and an associative ethos of design. Paper #15 conceptualizes relationality in terms of dialogism. Inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, paper #15 explores the dialogic relationality of the everyday inventions of Syrians living in Azraq Refugee Camp, Jordan. Instead of following a conventional participatory procedure, authors adopted a material

studies approach to surface residents' interpretations and rearticulations of the spatial characteristics of the camp. These characteristics, when contrasted with the values underlying the initial design of the camp (e.g., efficiency, control, security, and standardisation), reveal opportunities for dialogue between the residents and the camp management. In addition, paper #17 adopts feminist care ethics as a relational approach and unpack the concept of precarity in futuring practices. The authors propose that a care-driven approach emphasizes maintenance, continuity, and repair of the world in a web that consists of not only humans but also non-humans and future generations.

Paper #13 and #14 adopt differing positions on ethical engagement. Paper #13 proposes that philosophical thought experiments inspired by the work of philosopher Derek Parfit as a means to disrupt existing ways of thinking and to trigger creative disequilibrium, which, they argue, can strengthen mental capacities of designers. Central to this proposition is the relevance Non-Identity Problem (a philosophical thought experiment that challenges intuitive assumptions and reasoning around the question of our moral obligations towards 'future people') for conceptualising design ethics. In contrast, paper #14 compares top-down and bottom-up approaches to ethical engagement in design processes, and proposes a new, bottom-up approach, namely 'Creative Ethics', illustrated through the case of a gender-neutral toilet design exercise, conducted in an educational setting. Authors argue that a 'creative ethics' approach may help conceptualize ethics as a source of inspiration and creativity, rather than a burdening cognitive task that slows down design activities. Finally, paper #16, which is situated in a European consortium research project in a hard-to-enter care environment with double vulnerable patients, seem to reconcile these top-down and bottom-up perspectives to ethical engagement. The authors propose that utilizing secondary data sources (e.g., you tube videos) in hard-to-enter care environments can enhance sensitivity to the research environment and help negotiate differences in the research consortium. The authors embed this perspective in a critical comparison of anticipatory, procedural research ethics vs. dynamic, unpredictable, and situated ethics of researching in the 'real-world'.

Together, these contributions raise questions and explore how the approaches to ethics for design may vary depending on the attributes or delicacy of complex situations. Together, they contribute with knowledge of different experiences, situational aspects, and approaches that highlight the peculiarities of various design situations that need situated means to address ethical questions and moral dilemmas. The diversity of research experiences is rich and sometimes contradictory. One paper for example questions our ethical design responsibility of using existing data rather than harvesting new data, while other papers argue for anthropological experiences with reflective and collaborative interaction or responsive caring approaches, that may not be reduced to methods or toolkits. This poses an interesting difference in where ethics is derived from: is it a bottom-up 'creative ethics' approach, thought experiments, or dialogue that construct ethical engagement? Together the papers are representative of a diversity of positions and relations on ethics for design.

5. Learnings and future research

Returning to the five themes and questions that we started out with in the call for papers (see page 1), we are pleased to observe that contributions address almost all questions and at the same time, they help expand or reframe them. Most of the submissions help address the question: *How to nurture an ethical awareness and accountability in design and innovation practices?* (see Table 1). This demonstrates that many researchers experience the need for advancing interdisciplinary exchange and re-examining design (research) methodologies to create space for ethical engagement and accountability. In addition, we see that the concept of care and care ethics come up in several contributions (e.g., paper # 2, 10, 11, 17), which is in line with our definition of ethics as an 'invitation to care' as SIG on Design Ethics. Besides 'care', the contributions introduce new and inspiring concepts such as imaginaries, dialogism and thought experiments.

We did not receive contributions on the aesthetics of design, and neither did we receive submissions on ethics for climate justice specifically. The latter could be because climate issues are considered as an application field to which justice theories and principles may apply to. Justice-oriented theories and principles are more widely discussed as part of the Pluriversal SIG track. As for the former, aesthetics of design, we observe that a critical (vs. utilitarian) understanding of aesthetics is a new domain in design with few scholars and contributions that may not have historically been part of the DRS community. One of our main goals as a SIG is to expand and advance this interdisciplinary arena of research.

Rather surprising was that we received only one submission that explicitly addresses ethics in design education, even though we use and observe the use of many toolkits and frameworks to teach ethics. Thus, another goal as a SIG is to conduct a systematic review of these existing approaches and to identify knowledge gaps and relations to stimulate future contributions on this theme.

Question in the call for papers	Paper Number	Theme Session
What are the ethical and societal implications of design for innovation (processes, strategies, artifacts)?	7, 9, 11	Ethics in Design
	15	Ethics for Design
How to nurture an ethical awareness and accountability in design and innovation practices?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Ethics of Design
	6, 8	Ethics in Design
	13, 14, 15, 17	Ethics for Design
What are the main questions concerning power, agency, and positionality that design should recognize and address in inter/transdisciplinary settings?	10	Ethics in Design
	12, 15, 16, 17	Ethics for Design
How to embed critical-ethical reflection in design education?	7	Ethics in Design
	14	Ethics for Design

In closing, the contributions in this track represent a firm step forward in building a nuanced and reflexive discussion on the entanglement of design and ethics, grounded in theories, practice-based perspectives and emerging research questions. We wish all contributors a lively and engaging discussion at DRS2024 in Boston.

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