



Delft University of Technology

## Editorial: theme Situations

Boess, S.U.; Cain, Rebecca

### DOI

[10.21606/drs.2020.101](https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2020.101)

### Publication date

2020

### Document Version

Final published version

### Published in

Synergy - DRS International Conference 2020

### Citation (APA)

Boess, S. U., & Cain, R. (2020). Editorial: theme Situations. In S. Boess, M. Cheung, & R. Cain (Eds.), *Synergy - DRS International Conference 2020* (pp. 1-3) <https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2020.101>

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## Editorial: theme Situations

Stella BOESS, Rebecca CAIN

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Situations are an emergent theme in design research that reflect the community's increasing awareness of positionality, diverse circumstances and contexts. How is design research situated in cross-disciplinary collaboration, navigating cultures, diversity, ethics, sense of place and sense of materials, and the habits of different design communities? Under which conditions does design research flourish and is it able to help create positive impact? What are the dynamics between design research, governments and industry contexts?

This theme is the newest among the five sub-themes of the conference, and the papers in it are the most diverse. It is also the smallest theme by numbers of submissions that the reviewers associated with it, indicating that it is still in development within the design research community.

The first sub-theme presented is that of **Languages and Values**. Paper 148 takes us into design managers' strategic contexts and how meaning is made – either reproducing or denormalising historical assumptions, thus opening up a space for critical reflection. Paper 177 takes on the effects of similar reflections on interpersonal relationships in design and social innovation and charts a path towards establishing mutuality and building reciprocity. Paper 183 provides a theoretical contribution on values and how to address and reconcile when these diverge among stakeholders.

The next type of situations with which design research is concerned is represented in the sub-theme **Design for Belonging**. Paper 278 describes enhancing a city's status of wellbeing and engagement with diverse cultures by means of student projects engaging with arts and culture in New Zealand. Paper 324 describes how social design can engage with identity formation in the family context through narrative theory. Paper 318 goes to an even more personal topic – paediatric palliative care – to invite design to engage with Life design, Legacy and Difficult conversations.

Sub-theme **Localities and Data** moves from the personal and relationships context to look at digitalization in relation to the material lifeworld. Paper 183, one of the most highly reviewed among the submissions, takes a derelict temple site as a starting point for transformative reuse through virtual embodiments and craft knowledge, and framing this



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activity as cosmopolitan-localism. Paper 218 adds a theoretical angle for approaches like this, by anchoring AI in a material perspective for a more considered use. The third paper in this group, 293, engages with the next frontier in IoT infrastructures, which is keeping data in the geographical locality where it originates to improve privacy – this is called Edge Computing – and presents two design fictions illustrating it.

Sub-theme **Experiential Knowledge** turns to the situation of the designer themselves. Aside from the rich repertoire of methods available to designers, their own meaning-making is the focus here. Paper 187 analyses what is typically tacit in the reflective doodling we often do and illustrates how it actually has and could have more of link to designing for transitions. Paper 350 expands on this theoretically by exploring the cognitive process involved in visual metaphor creation and metaphoric thinking. Paper 350 complements the previous by adding the reader's perspective. Within a very specific focus of typographic emphasis in headings, it compares how these headings are perceived differently by readers than by those who designed them.

Sub-theme **Research through Design** ties in with the previous sub-themes' concerns by explicitly focusing on both the design and life situation and which knowledge can emerge from them. Paper 220 starts with an intimately intertwined life and design situation: the design researchers' own wedding and the design artefacts involved in it, taking place in a highly politicized border context. The authors articulate three forces as shaping the design outputs and as forces of design agency: profile, politics and potential of the border. In paper 108, in contrast, the designer anticipates on someone else as user: in 3D ceramics printing, they develop hybrid design artefacts. They are hybrid both in focusing on 'user-completion', and in fusing processes and techniques from the different disciplinary modes of digital fabrication and ceramics. Lastly, paper 362 makes a first attempt at clarifying what connects and separates different RtD approaches – the diversity has been illustrated by the very contrasting concerns in papers 220 and 108. Paper 362 identifies 11 themes of concerns among a research community of practitioners of Research through Design.

The theme Situations is completed by two DRS SIG themed sections. The papers in these sections span the themes of Situations, Processes and Impact, illustrating how they are connected.

The Pluriversal Design SIG conveners have curated five papers that span the themes of Situations and Processes. This special interest group of the DRS is one of its youngest and takes as its goal "promoting radical, liberatory, intercultural and pluralistic conversations about design" (DRS website). The SIG conveners introduce the papers in the editorial that follows, followed by the papers themselves.

Closing out this theme section, the Inclusive Design special interest group of the DRS, who takes as its goal "inclusive and wider participation in design" (DRS website), has curated that fall within the Situations theme as well as within the Impacts theme. The SIG convener introduce the papers in the editorial that follows, followed by the papers themselves.

The papers in the theme Situations have provided insights pertaining to all but the last of

the questions raised at the outset of this section. Insights on the dynamics between design research, governments and industry contexts are addressed under the Co-Creation theme.