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Call for Papers for a Special Issue on

## **Posthumanist HCI and the More-than-Human Turn in Design**

*Special Issue Editors*

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Through design, we are transforming the planet. While there is often a beneficial intent to design, the transformative consequences of design are not always positive: from climate change to resource depletion to surveillance capitalism. Through design, we are also transforming ourselves. Whether it is about relieving ourselves from having to remember birthdays, automatically trading stocks at (nearly) the speed of light or using machine-made decisions to manage insurance claims, we share agency with increasingly capable, but also opaque, machines. And throughout these pressing design challenges, there is growing concern that the human-centeredness that characterizes design's foundations is reaching its limits.

Ranging from the explicit focus on the 'user' in human-centered design via the human exceptionalism of the Western humanist tradition (including the aesthetics and ethics associated with it) to notions such as the Anthropocene, much of contemporary design practice has developed in relation to perspectives and contexts inherently centered on certain human needs and desires at the expense of all other forms of life – many humans included. And while such perspectives have proven very effective for advocating human needs and desires in the context of technology development and mass-consumption, it seems increasingly clear that they are less useful when responding to current challenges, for which considering the more-than-human world is crucial.

Reflecting upon what is manifesting as a more-than-human turn in the context of HCI, there seem to be at least two main trajectories taking inspiration from different ways of decentering the human in and through design. The first one concerns critiquing and moving beyond human exceptionalism, considering other species or ecosystems as equally important. The second trajectory instead turns towards our relations to technology. As technology takes on tasks before being assigned only to humans, this trajectory contemplates how agency and intention might no longer be just a human characteristic, but something that increasingly also involves machines.

A more-than-human turn acknowledges that we are more than just 'users' – the ones that use things (up) – but that we are part of extensive ecosystems. Within these ecosystems, it is not exclusively humans that act and produce effects; microorganisms, plants, animals and algorithms do so too. But how to conceive of these entanglements, and how can design be

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transformed to meet the needs of an entangled world?

To explore a wider range of possible futures and new design ideas, we need to de-center ourselves and step out of an anthropocentric view of the world. And especially in areas such as HCI, we also need to take the idea of machine agency seriously and consider what might happen if we think of AI systems and networked computational things not only as designed artifacts or technological enablers but in terms of nonhuman participants in a design space previously reserved just for us.

This means that the locus of design is shifting from the production of objects (whether physical products, digital services, or data-driven systems) to the cultivation of new practices of making, unmaking and becoming—and to how formations of humans and nonhumans are enacted and performed within such practices. Learning how to shape, govern, and care for how humans and nonhumans perform next to each other and relate, rather than just knowing what local functionalities to look for, will open an unprecedented space of more-than-human interactions.

This will be the first special issue to name and consolidate a wide array of current posthumanist approaches to HCI under the concept of a more-than-human turn. Each of these approaches is engaged in decentering the human in favor of the participation of the nonhuman, understood by contributors from a variety of perspectives—philosophies, methodologies, politics, economies, and pedagogies.

In this special issue, we aim to gather and discuss examples, and together articulate, speculate and experiment with how to craft new capacities for meaning and action in the co-performance of humans and nonhumans. Focusing on the possible future trajectories, this will be an exploration of what research programs are currently forming in this area.

## Topics of Interest

- Artificial agency and co-performativity
- The interface as a site of reconfiguration
- Decentering design methodologies
- Entanglement and design experiments
- Ethics and aesthetics of posthumanist participation
- Pedagogies of nonrepresentational design
- Socio-economic and political redirections

## Timing

- Call for Proposals: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022
- Proposals due: ~~15<sup>th</sup>~~ 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022
- Response to authors: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022
- Full papers due: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023
- Reviews to authors: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023
- Revised papers due: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023
- Reviews to authors: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023
- Final papers due: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023

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## Submission of Proposals

To help authors find a good fit, we encourage proposals. Proposals should be about 1000 words and provide a clear indication of what the paper is about. Proposals will be evaluated for relevance to the special issue theme, and guidance will be given. Both proposal and full paper submissions should be submitted to the [HCI Editorial site](#). Follow the guidelines and instructions for submissions on the site. There is a place on the submission site to note that your submission is for the special issue. Special Issue submissions will be peer-reviewed to the usual standards of the HCI journal. For questions and queries about the special issue, please email one of the special issue editors.

## Special Issue Editors

**Elisa Giaccardi** is Chair and Professor in Post-industrial Design at TU Delft, The Netherlands. She has studied and worked in Italy (University of Turin), the United Kingdom (University of Plymouth), the United States (University of Colorado at Boulder), Spain (Universidad Carlos III), and Sweden (Umeå Institute of Design)—an international and interdisciplinary trajectory that has shaped her sensitivity to inclusion and diversity at various levels. Her research interests reflect a persistent concern with designing as a shared process of cultivation and management of opportunity spaces. After pioneering work in metadesign, collaborative and open design processes, her research over the last decade has turned to more-than-human design. In this space, she engages with how computational things today connect and learn, and thus actively participate in design in ways that previous industrially produced objects could not. Her work has contributed significantly to the development of post-industrial and post-humanist approaches in design and HCI. She is currently Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the EU-funded innovative training network DCODE ([www.dcode-network.eu](http://www.dcode-network.eu)).

**Johan Redström** is Professor in Design at Umeå Institute of Design, Umeå University, Sweden. He has previously been Rector of Umeå Institute of Design, and before that Design Director of the Interactive Institute, Sweden. Working with a research through design approach that combines experimental practice with design philosophy, he has done research in areas such as slow technology, sustainability and other emerging areas of design where ‘things’ are changing because of new digital forms of making and using. His most recent books are “Making Design Theory” (MIT Press 2017) and “Changing Things: The Future of Objects in a Digital World” together with Heather Wiltse (Bloomsbury 2019). He is co-Principal Investigator of the EU-funded innovative training network DCODE ([www.dcode-network.eu](http://www.dcode-network.eu)), and a member of the Committee for Artistic Research at the Swedish Research Council, and the International Advisory board of the Design Research Society.

**Iohanna Nicenboim** is a Microsoft funded PhD candidate at Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. Her research investigates conversational AI through more-than-human design to design more inclusive and explainable interactions with artificial agents. Before starting the Phd, she had worked as a design curator, and run her own speculative design practice, in which she designed award winning fictions which were presented in international conferences and festivals. In 2016-2018 she applied a more-than-human design approach to

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investigate resourcefulness in older people as part of a multidisciplinary research project combining ethnography, machine learning and design. Iohanna has taught workshops, masterclasses, and courses on more-than-human design, and has published in the same topic papers and videos in international venues. Recently, she hosted a panel at ACM CHI which discussed more-than-human concepts, methodologies, and practices in HCI. She is the founder of the more-than-human design network (<https://more-than-human.com/>) which aims at creating opportunities for experimentation and research among designers working with posthuman approaches within and beyond academia.

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