Editorial: Ethics, Values, and Designer Responsibility

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1   Introduction

As we rely upon increasingly complex sociotechnical systems to support ourselves and, by extension, the structures of society, it becomes yet more important to consider how ethics and values intertwine in design activity. Numerous methods that address issues related to ethics and value-centeredness in design activity exist, but it is unclear what role the design research and practice communities should play in shaping the future of these design approaches. Importantly, how might researchers and practitioners become more aware of the normative assumptions that underlie both their design activity and the design artifacts that result?

Previous research has revealed that a designer's *awareness* of ethical issues can be raised through value-centered design approaches and methods (c.f., value-sensitive design), but the broader ethical impacts of these approaches and methods are often underexplored. For example, the diversity of potential stakeholders and complexity of use contexts may not be immediately accessible to a designer, leaving their near- and long-term ethical responsibility under-developed. There is always the spectre of unintended consequences, while shifts in culture make designs not only obsolete but unfathomable.

For this special track, we invited contributions that explored the ethical implications of design activity in a wide variety of framings, including:

- Alternate framings of ethics and values in the design of sociotechnical systems (e.g., the ethics of *care*)
- The role and responsibility of the designer in designing artifacts with different media and breadth of outcomes (e.g., physical, digital, service, society)
- Approaches to ethical training in design education
- Designers' identity formation and practices in relation to ethics and values
- Designing to allow a play of values, acknowledging the need for flexible infrastructures in an evolving world

2   Track Overview

We received a wide range of submissions that addressed various framings of ethical behavior in relation to design activity, design outcomes, design practices, and motivations for designing. We briefly summarize each accepted paper below, highlighting the ways in which the author(s) engaged

with ethical frameworks, designer responsibility, and the interplay between design intentions and outcomes:

In "*Examining the Professional Codes of Design Organisations*," Peter Buwert analyzes existing professional codes of ethics from 14 design organizations, identifying points of consensus and possible critiques of these codes in relation to ethical design behavior. Building on previous critiques of ethical codes, Buwert repositions ethical behavior within professions as a consensus of a group of designers, describing an evolving, bottom-up definition of ethically-centered design practice that must be actively nurtured in a reflexive manner.

In "*Ethical Issues in Designing Interventions for Behavioural Change*," Gyuchan Jun et al. identify factors that designers should consider in relation to behavior-focused interventions. Through a case study, the authors consider how an ethical framing of design activity facilitates the asking of questions that juxtapose undesirable and desirable behavior in relation to design interventions. Multiple questions across three ethical dimensions are considered as part of a potential framework.

In "*Ethics in Design: Pluralism and the Case for Justice in Inclusive Design*," Matteo Bianchin and Ann Heylighen leverage Rawls' theory of justice as fairness as a means of interrogating inclusive design practices. By focusing on social distribution of usability, Bianchin and Heylighen argue for an inclusive design that respects the autonomy of individuals, and leverages access to this population as part of the design process.

In "*The Ethics and Values of Visual Communication Strategies in European Advertisements in 21st Century Western and Islamic Culture*," Ilze Loza analyzes advertisements that focus on Islamic populations through the lens of ethics and values, revealing tensions among societal mores and advertiser goals. Loza argues for design outcomes that are respectful of cultural differences and prohibitions around certain gendered representations, particularly in the wake of globalization.

In "*Design for Profit or Prosperity?*," Else Skjold and Frederik Larsen argue that the innovative outcomes called for in design activity can often become a vehicle for neoliberal capitalist ideals. In contrast, Skjold and Larsen reposition design activity through the lens of ethics, using a case study to examine the productive tensions between societal engagement and responsibility and the goals of industry partners.

In "*Platform Ethics in Technology: What Happens to the User?*," Anuradha Reddy and Maria Hellström Reimer address the role of the user in large technology platforms, particularly using the perspective of the user to describe ethical tensions and dissonances present in these platforms. Using an example of street mapping, Reddy and Hellström Reimer identify multiple tensions between technological "platformization" and the visions of democratized technologies, revealing opportunities for ethics-focused interrogation of these complex platforms.

In "*Good Design-Driven Innovation*," Ehsan Baha et al. probe the nature of a designer's values as it impacts perceptions of "good design." These principles of good design were found to be important levers in empowering the designer's process, allowing the designer to be aware of and design in concordance with their identity and societal goals. The resulting values are thus seen as having a reflective value that facilitates the generation of innovative outcomes.

3   Synthesis of Contributions

These papers represent a diverse set of responses to the track focus, using case studies, content analysis, and theoretical/conceptual analysis to describe the role(s) of ethics and values in design processes and outcomes.

The majority of the contributions directly address the ethics of design engagement, such as Bianchin and Heylighen in inclusive design, Gyuchan Jun et al. in design for behavioral change, and Reddy and Hellström Reimer in taking a user-focused perspective on platform ethics. All of these contributions probe the nature of ethical involvement in design, using ethical frameworks to interrogate the nature of design(er) responsibility, and the interplay among design intentions, behaviors, and outcomes. Other submissions address the notion of ethics primarily from the perspective of the designer herself, foregrounding their role in producing change. Baha et al. do this by describing the values

that are taken on by designers in producing innovative outcomes, while Skjold and Larsen juxtapose the goals of designers that are oriented towards innovation, and the impact of neoliberal capitalist ideals on these goals.

The final two contributions provide dramatically different perspectives on design outcomes, with Buwert arguing from the perspective of ethical codes in design organizations, and Loza describing advertisements that feature or are oriented towards Islamic populations. In these contributions, Buwert pushes the conversation from organizations towards consensus among individuals, while Loza describes tensions that designers face when confronting culturally-bound societal expectations and the desires of advertising stakeholders.

In sum, these contributions represent the broad utility of considering ethics and values in relation to design activity. Whether from the perspective of designer responsibility, professional codes of ethics, or the ethics of design outcomes, these analyses reveal many important tensions in designing equitable and appropriate sociotechnical systems in diverse contexts.

4 Example References

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