

P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN

CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES: DESIGN CAPITALISM BACK AND FORTH.

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DOI: [10.63442/DMXW8960](https://doi.org/10.63442/DMXW8960)

The track was devoted to tantalising tensions between mainstream contemporary design cultures and those of (semi)peripheral capitalisms and emerging third world and global south countries. In this respect the issue of the total aestheticization of the world proved to be of high eminence considering the way how spectacularly did unsustainable late capitalism apply design and the hegemony of consumption as a means of the (an) aestheticization of consumers and the corresponding total virtualisation and alienation of citizens living in a “sublimated slavery” (Herbert Marcuse) in which basic human rights and dignified living conditions are no longer tenable. The neoliberal McDonaldisation, a particular type of colonisation that swept through the post-socialist region during and after the political regime changes is a unique phenomenon that is yet to be fully understood in the broader perspectives of the apparent failure of liberal democracies in the region. Neoliberal colonization went hand in hand with destabilizing processes of postmodernist relativism and criticism of classical liberalism which brought with it different anti-humanist and anti-Enlightenment subversion on behalf of mostly leftist cultural studies and critical theories that in turn gradually became hobbyhorses of new authoritarian and illiberal cultural and political streams as it is now rather clear from Fareed Zakaria’s, the late Ulrich Beck’s and Francis Fukuyama’s recent works. Furthermore, the postcolonial situation of the global south was also in our focus, because thought- and meaningful comparisons help us better understand our pretty diverse anamneses and find mutual diagnoses and promising prognoses together on a global scale.

We invited scholars and design educators to discuss options for critical and speculative design and practice-oriented design culture studies interventions that can help better understand the recent past and in turn, create new perspectives for a better and more humane future with dignity. The power of criticism either written or built in art and design projects was of high interest in this respect as in the case of fashion and design education for example.

The global power structures within contemporary design cultures are converging in a specific field of design pedagogy, fashion and textile education. Fashion is often regarded as the “black sheep” of design, seen as excessively dominated by capitalist market forces and a no-go zone. However, it has recently become more receptive to speculative perspectives that offer systemic critiques of the industry. Concepts such as deep localization, design research as an ethical stance, and textile connectivity, alongside criticism of the overly optimistic promises of pluriversality, were central themes addressed by researchers in the sessions. While capitalism has traditionally anchored fashion to the market, education appears to be creating an alternative pathway -- one that challenges the system by cultivating a differently educated workforce. A fundamental question arised during the conference: “Could this be the foundation for systemic change? Could this guarantee a fundamental switch to a new paradigm?”

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This contribution was presented at Cumulus Budapest 2024: P/References of Design conference, hosted by the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, Hungary between May 15-17, 2024.

Conference Website

cumulusbudapest2024.mome.hu

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ISBN Volume 1: 978-952-7549-02-5 (PDF)

ISBN Volume 2: 978-952-7549-03-2 (PDF)

DOI Volume 1: <https://doi.org/10.63442/IZUP8898>

DOI Volume 2: <https://doi.org/10.63442/TADX4016>

Conference Organisers

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME)

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