

Gender and Agency: Care as a Facilitator for Social Change

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1. Workshop Organiser/s

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2. Context and Aim of Workshop

This workshop intends to repurpose the language arising from the experiences of care as an agency to critically inform theoretical discourse of design that promotes collaborative and participatory practices at different levels in society. And reflect on its potential to create a design framework that operates on non-hierarchical, informal, network-oriented participatory logics. The main interest is to explore alternative understandings outside the Western patriarchal structure that governs society and give space to potentialize and valorize other knowledges and practices. By identifying concepts that relate to care as perceived and experienced by the participants at three different scales: individual, community, and global levels. It aims to evaluate the elements emerging from these scales concerning aspects of inclusion, respect, and alternate ways of thinking (why), collaborating /participating (how?), and

designing (what?). Finally, it intends to bring together and evaluate the emerging exploratory frames through collaborative discussions to develop a 'care' framework informed by cultural similarities and differences and engenders agency.

The shadow of patriarchy goes beyond the mere domination of men over women, where it overruns the flexible and boundaryless systems of society resulting in a civilizational crisis in the name of development (Von Werlhof, 2007). It represents rigidity, fixed ways of being, doing and thinking. Patriarchal culture, ruled by male individualistic values, gives rise to emotions that display mistrust and a hunger for power to take control over humans and nature (Escobar, 2018). These elements surface up in most post-modernist design approaches that are based on the capitalist and destructive ways of mass production and consumption, that promotes neoliberal rather than enhancing grassroots practices at a local level. However, recently it has been argued for the need to re-think the meaning and purpose of design that promotes the notion of care towards diverse forms of life despite contrasting notions of sociability and the world (Escobar, 2018, Manzini, 2015, Irwin, 2015, Thackara, 2006, Fry, 2013). This concept of design focuses on interconnectedness and interdependence of all forms of life, fluidity, respect, and collaboration, which is embedded within the matristic way of life and asserted to be of feminine values (van Bogaert and Ogunbanjo, 2009). Matriarchy does not prescribe hegemony or hierarchy (Escobar, 2018) but is characterized by the concept of 'care', respect, empathy, inclusion, participation, and continuous reorganization of life. The concept of 'care' that forms an essential component of women's daily life and experiences has consistently been devalued and has remained unacknowledged.

As Gilligan suggests, "The idea of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone." (Gilligan, 1993, p.62). Mothering is integral to femininity. It impacts essential factors related to new and future generations, such as environmental, cultural, and political aspects; the connecting and nurturing action and mothering can shape and render a more appropriate role model for society to follow (van Bogaert and Ogunbanjo, 2009). Therefore, understanding how care permeates the construction of social entities expands and enriches the social resources needed to build upon collectivity (Gilligan, 1982). Furthermore, the notion of care has the capability to confront neoliberal individualism and to find agency as a directing synergy by redefining moral frameworks, forms or organizing and governing (Gilligan, 2011), increasing the understanding and potentializing the continual creation of the site where care can emerge, and relations can be fostered (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). Given the current and extraordinary circumstances in which we dwell, care becomes an especially relevant and critical aspect in our daily lives.

The co-created knowledge that emerges from this workshop will contribute towards creating a conceptual framework that can extend beyond the workshop; one that is based on a flexible structure that (1) promotes social inclusion and collectiveness, besides an individualistic and hierarchical structure; (2) generates human capacities guided by social values rather

than economic interests; (3) increases society's engagement and its members' role in inclining towards participation and action; (4) encourages participants for further collaborations to foster informal horizontal productive models. Further, this will eventually contribute to and strengthen a broader discussion on the possibility of informing alternate design cultures from a non-patriarchal lens.

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

The following table describes a half-day workshop schedule on an online mode:

TOPIC	ACTIVITIES	TIME
1. Introduction	Introduction of participants and facilitators	30 min
	Recorded presentation: - Workshop's goals - Working process - Care at different levels & examples - Getting familiar with the platform & tools	15 min
2. Group discussion	Group 1: Care from a personal level	60 min
	Group 2: Care from a regional level	
	Group 3: Care from a global level	
3. Sharing session	A group representative presents the outcomes	15 min
	B R E A K	10 min
4. Common space	- Compare and discuss between 3 levels - Categorize and subcategorize themes - Find commonalities & key concepts	30 min
5. Framework	- Group discussion - Development of the framework	50 min
6. Conclusion	- How care could be used as agency to inform design practices and theories? - Discuss further implementation and refinement process of the framework for future design practices	30 min
TOTAL: 4 HOURS		

The workshop will lead towards a shared understanding of instruments of care in the form of a conceptual framework to be implemented in complex scenarios through citizen-led and bottom-up participatory initiatives. This framework would comprise aspects of inclusion, respect, participation, informality, and non-hierarchical networks that can act as agents of alternative practices and design theories by understanding (1) 'care' within a matristic culture, (2) the meaning of collaborative and participatory initiatives at a societal level, (3) 'care' as agency.

4. Intended Audience

To attend this workshop, it is expected that participants are engaged, share academic or professional interests around:

- Gender studies
- Social design
- Post-modern & future design practices
- Design as agency
- Decolonizing design
- Capacity and Community building
- Design for policy and governance

5. Space and Equipment Required

The workshop is entirely online using Miro, an interactive platform for participants to exchange and collaborate. Participants must have or have access to a computer.

6. Potential Outputs

Besides identifying critical elements to inform design's agency, the conceptual framework intends to recognize the overlapping relationships between them and provide flexibility for its adaptation within different contexts. The process intends to go beyond the workshop's scope. With further development, there is a potential to apply the refined framework in contradictory, incomplete or dynamic situations. Moreover, this workshop will also unveil specific challenges and barriers emerging from repurposing the concept of care to promote agency.

8. References

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About the Organisers:

Organiser 1 Andrea's research centers on autonomy and decoloniality through design. She has designed and facilitated workshops based on participatory processes that focus on social inclusion, alternatives to development, synergy through arts and culture, culture of peace and non-violence, and design for autonomy.

Organiser 2 Kritiy's research interests include understanding the social aspects of mobility, informality as a design paradigm, gender studies and design for autonomy. She has worked in collaboration with several NGOs and has presented her research at various international levels.