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A situated analysis of research publication evaluation in Latin countries based on a pluriversal approach

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ABSTRACT

The global knowledge ecosystem is affected by ethnocentrism and witnesses Western monopolies of knowledge that have built hegemonic structures and narratives, especially in scientific and academic publishing. For the design field, the paper proposes a transition from processes of power and control over knowledge to processes of distributed knowledge leadership among the stakeholders of the publishing system (journals, conferences, scientific associations and societies, academic networks). It analyses the publishing ecosystem of Latin American countries as a case study representative of Global South knowledge that is 'decentring' scientific design publishing. By problematizing pluriversity, it proposes a practical framework on international collaboration, informed evaluation, and distributed processes to promote equity and accessibility. The 8th International Forum of Design as a Process serves as a testbed, showcasing community-led knowledge experimentation targeting the Global South countries. The case study highlights the potential to re-evaluate established structures for more pluriversal design knowledge.

Introduction

This paper discusses possible ways of 'decentring' the scientific design publishing ecosystem by adopting a pluriversal approach.

The paper begins with a literature review that carefully problematizes the concept of global diversity in knowledge production, as well as the multifaceted notion of pluriversality in relation to design, approaching these topics with both prudence and an awareness of their complexity, yet with a clear intent to open up the debate on issues that are not easily graspable. Therefore, the publishing ecosystem of Latin American countries is analysed as a representative of Global South knowledge that attempts to support a

more plural design publishing, with an awareness of its limitation and intrinsic bias. In this context, the 8th International Forum promoted by the Latin Network for the Development of Design as a Process is examined as a venue that could potentially facilitate the acknowledgement of systemic diversity and foster inclusivity in research and publication. This case study illustrates how interpretations of pluriversality have supported the whole process, aligning with the theoretical discourse presented. The conclusion suggests that a broader network prioritising local contexts and contents through a more conscious evaluation framework could be promising in achieving a pluriversal recognition of scientific perspectives. However, we fully recognize that both framework and debate are in their initial stages and require further development.

Literature review

Global diversity in new knowledge production

In the last century, we have witnessed a relevant epistemological change in the way of thinking and organising knowledge. With the rise of the digital age, Carayannis and Campbell (2006) claimed the coexistence and co-development of diverse knowledge modes in an interconnected and networked perspective. Human cognitive capacity is expanded by technological means and the individual dimension of knowledge merges into collective intelligence (Lévy in Peters 2015).

In this framework of vast opportunities, the biocultural diversity of knowledge seems to be disregarded.

The global knowledge ecosystem is affected by ethnocentrism and witnesses Western monopolies that built hegemonic structures and narratives. Graham, Hale, and Stephens (2011) visualise the cultural and geographical biases of global knowledge in terms of infrastructure and cultural discourse; some authors speak about 'periphery countries', and Western domination seems to be intact (Kień 2017).

Academic publishing reflects these inequalities through linguistic bias in the global journal system (Larivière and Desrochers 2015) and a publishing oligopoly (Larivière, Haustein and Mongeon 2015). Scientific publishing mirrors an unbalanced power of expression of the scientific thinking of a wider geographical area, especially from the Global South[1] (hereafter GS) (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Chan 2014) and low-middle-income countries (hereafter LMIC) as defined by World Bank (2023). According to Reiter (2019), orthodoxy is Western bias in social science and humanities publications, which are trained by Western disciplinary standards in academic validation.

Eventually, the developing geopolitical scenario is challenging the current knowledge and publishing monopolies (Fiormonte and Priego 2016). In this

process, the distance and assumed relationship between the centre and periphery is fading, and border thinking from the margins becomes relevant. Within this framework, digital resources should enable the emergent diversity of knowledge (Boast, Bravo, and Srinivasan 2007), as well as scientific publishing (Lupo 2022).

However, the ideology of knowledge supremacy must be questioned beyond the critique of modernity and colonialism, proposing new mindsets, theories, and methods to transform the world's dominant hegemonic narrative into multiple alternatives. To achieve the DEAI (diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion) imperative in the knowledge ecosystem as well, it is essential to allow actors outside of the mainstream (other than the dominant European-North American perspective) to transform the dominant plot and therefore move to worlds of many centres (Leitão and Noel 2022).

These reflections are also common to design, which is often concerned with the concept of peripheral visions, by which it should be done in the peripheries and not for them (Fathers 2003); or marginality to which design history subjects some design models (Fry 1995, 2017). The recent focus on 'power' in contemporary design calls for a critical revaluation in a world defined by radical interdependence, encouraging diverse and collective narratives (Iñiguez Flores and Gianfrate 2022).

Pluriversity in praxis: From plurality to distributed leadership in design knowledge

Global design has often assumed the role of exogenous entities positioned to create solutions in any context they analyse. This perspective, largely stemming from the Global North (hereafter GN) hemisphere, tends to overlook the intertwining of cultural identity and local knowledge, favouring hegemonic positions (Kozma 2023). However, the current state of the design discipline demands a shift towards not only plurality, in the sense of embracing global permeability to differences and identities' recognition in a system of coexistence (Alvelos and Barreto 2022), but also towards pluriversality, 'as the entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential' (Mignolo 2018).

Addressing pluriversality and multipolarity are crucial issues for new geopolitics of knowledge and call for careful and in-depth debates.

In the previous paragraph, we reviewed the concept of hegemonic structures/narratives in global knowledge and in scientific production, introducing how design cultures are problematizing the idea of power, borders, marginality and periphery. This is strictly anchored to the interpretation of pluralism and plurality, as a critique of modernity that emerged consistently in the last 25 years (Blair Vasconcelos and Martin 2018), also into the design domain.

The most influential definitions by Arturo Escobar (2011, 2018, 2020) looks at Walter Mignolo's investigation of pluriversality (2018). As scholars in the GS, they 'developed southern theories that are intended as alternatives to, and a challenge to the dominance of, western theories and their geo-political, cultural-historical location in Europe' (Blair Vasconcelos and Martin 2018, 8).

However, the concept of pluriverse is debatable: it relies on plurality but should be more than acknowledging or 'tolerating' differences or multiple perspectives as advocated by pluralism (Querejazu 2016). Even if pluralism is not merely diversity living and coexisting alongside, but 'energetic engagement with diversity' (Blair Vasconcelos and Martin 2018, 3), understanding that reality is constituted by many ontologies (for instance human and non-human that have the same political agency), somehow interconnected (De la Cadena 2010), has epistemological and methodological consequences: they cannot simply be described as pluralist, otherwise they were subsumed by the Western modern framework of one world rule.

Furthermore, other concerns have been raised. On one hand, the pluriversal discourse is always more often regarded and adopted in Western theories. Still, it demands that Southern and Indigenous theories work with those in the West (Blair Vasconcelos and Martin 2018). On the other hand, scholars pointed out that pluriversal arguments fall short of shedding the binary logic entailed in Western modernity (especially when they 'work against' Western modernity, instead of eliminating any ontological hierarchy), or fail to shed light on the multifaceted nature of transformative initiatives (not overcoming the autonomy/heteronomy divide) (Masaki 2021). For the scope of this paper, we didn't assume the above-mentioned concepts (pluriverse and pluriversality, GS) assertively, acknowledging our potential Western bias and steering clear of simplistic Western rationalism. That said, we acknowledge we couldn't fully address the term's inherent complexity and its conflicting interpretations, focusing instead on contextualizing and exploring them within the design field.

Design practice offers a greater awareness in terms of diverse perspectives (Tunstall 2023) compared to the field of design knowledge, due to the legacy of colonization and the need to embrace cultural dynamics outside hegemonic centres (Bonsiepe 1971). In contrast, design knowledge tends to adhere to a mainstream methodological structure, potentially limiting the inclusion of diverse perspectives. This methodological structure belongs to the Western 'centre' (Trindade Perry and Soares Pereira 2023). The most evident impact of this global system of knowledge is that mainstream academic journals tend to overlook contributions from non-Western authors, often citing a perceived lack of academic rigour (Reiter, 2019). This exclusionary practice highlights a broader issue where scientific publishing manifests differently in GS contexts (Mehmeti 2022).

As a contribution to design publishing, we propose a potential paradigm: viewing the pluriverse approach as a possible transition from processes of power and control over knowledge to processes of distributed knowledge leadership, directing an epistemological change in the academic design community.

Knowledge leadership can be defined as an attitude or action that drives people to create, share and use new and important knowledge to bring change in collective thinking and outcomes beyond the reach of a single actor, involving a range of agencies (Mabey, Kulich and Lorenzi-Cioldi 2012). In this respect, promoting practical actions of a possible pluriversal perspective might support the reframe and distribution of knowledge practices among the stakeholders of the ecosystem of design scientific publishing, such as journals, conferences, scientific associations and networks. Therefore, we advise that, terms such as *pluriversal paradigm*, *knowledge accessibility*, and *distributed leadership* should not be cited rhetorically or ideologically; in this paper in fact, they are applied in practice to offer initial evidence and demonstrate their potential impact. To challenge the privileged knowledge generated in the GN, this paper argues for the need to expand community-led knowledge towards alternative publishing venues with a more plural and possibly pluriversal approach.

The Latin context and the Latin network for the development of design as a process

The research draws on Latin American (hereafter LA) countries as a representative example of the GS. We approach the issue from two perspectives:

- Framing the design publishing ecosystem in LA, using a semi-qualitative analysis to discuss the predisposition of established GS journals, conferences, and networks in supporting a plural design publishing.
- Presenting the experiences of the Latin Network (hereafter LN) for the Development of Design as a Process and its 8th International Forum as an emblematic venue dedicated to experiment pluriversal practices in visibility and evaluation through collaborative approaches and the engagement of early career researchers in publishing.

Both perspectives provide a preliminary hypothesis of factors that can hinder or enable a more conscious approach in reference to pluriversality in publishing assessment in LA countries.

The LN, established in 2008 with the 'Carta di Torino' Manifesto, is composed of a group of researchers of Latin language and culture, counting around 60 members from 15 countries, more than 20 universities in Europe and North/Central/South America[2].

The genesis was aligned with a geopolitical shift in the early 2000s when the mutual interest between European and Latin American design scholars was sparked again after a first wave emerged in the period following WWII. Thus, the connotation of the Network implies a geo-political will, questioning the centre-periphery model and its effect on designing in LA (Margolin 2007): the Latin vocation means to unify a territory in a cultural and political sense, seeking to recognise common perspectives, tools, methods, and approaches, beyond the native language they share[3].

The life cycle of the LN was characterized by a first phase of great attraction and a desire to internationalise the cultural experiences based on the scientific revision of the design processes and statutes of the two Latin continents, followed by a second phase during which nationalism prevailed. Finally, in the current phase, the two continents have returned to looking at each other with respect. Nevertheless, over the whole period, the LN strengthened the relationships, among the Latin countries, with LA and therefore these countries became privileged interlocutors for dialogue/confrontation and objects/context of experimentation, in the editorial field too, and therefore are the focus of this paper.

The scientific and academic design publishing ecosystem in Latin America: A semi-qualitative study

Many scholars discuss the need to think of scientific knowledge as an ecosystem (Altman and Cohen 2021), proposing a holistic and integrated approach to scholarly communication. The academic publishing ecosystem encompasses activities and agencies involved in producing and sharing scholarly research. It includes publishers and diverse dissemination channels, from traditional monographs to journal articles, conference papers, and community databases.

For the scope of this study, we specifically consider the publishing ecosystems in LA countries. In addition to scientific journals, we include scientific conference papers to highlight alternative platforms where knowledge can be distributed more equitably. This choice is reinforced by our analysis of the publishing pattern of the 8th International Forum of Design as a process, where the proceedings were published in the journal *diid - disegno industriale industrial design*

We want to underline that this section aims to provide a context within which to frame the experience of the 8th Forum. This analysis provides a background for discussing possible innovative frameworks that exemplify the first contributions of LA design communities to a pluriversal and more distributed discourse of knowledge production, challenging dominant publishing models rooted in the GN.

The methodology for the study of this publishing ecosystem is semi-qualitative and needs further development to overcome a certain degree of

subjectivity. The aim is to establish a knowledge base on design scientific publishing in LA, by fostering a discussion to extend the analysis to other GS countries within a quantitative framework.

Methodology

The selection criteria for the scientific journals were based on Gemser et al. (2012) perception-based approach to journal quality, rather than a citation-based approach.

We have discussed these criteria and decided to insert some correctives to adapt them to the LA context:

1. Accreditation: we considered from Scopus/WOS to other indexing systems or forms of accreditation at the national/international level. Accreditation has been also understood in the broad sense of reputation and accountability of the journals: we invited[4] leading scholars and members of the LN to list leading local journals in the field of design. Being aware of respondent's bias towards affiliated journals, we used the remaining criteria to refine the selection;
2. Peer-reviewed;
3. Active, established for at least 5 years and with a constant publication frequency (at least annual). LA journals on average have a longer heritage, but this shorter lifespan has been selected to include also journals that were established following the digital turn in publishing or that turned into digital;
4. Published by a scientific or University press.

By considering both design-related and design-focused journals (Gemser and de Bont 2016), we checked all the criteria in the journal websites and local directories.

23 journals were selected from the following countries: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Argentina[5]. The list of journals is shown in Table 1.

For each journal, certain aspects have been qualitatively analysed and collected in a spreadsheet[6], meant to explore and show the position of these LA journals in possibly decentring and supporting a plural vision in design publishing:

- Accepted languages;
- Accessibility, especially for GS and early-stage researchers: economic sustainability and preferential/reserved venues for publishing for young researchers;
- Local dimension (by article topics/special issues in the last 3-5 years);

Table 1. List of selected Latin America Journals.

N.	Journals (alphabetical order)	Country
1	ACTIO. Journal of Technology in Design, Film Arts, and Visual Communication	Colombia
2	Anuario Espacios Urbanos, Historia, Cultura y Diseño	Mexico
3	Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación	Argentina
4	DAPesquisa	Brazil
5	dat Journal - Design Art and Technology	Brazil
6	Diseña	Chile
7	Diseño y Sociedad	Mexico
8	dObra[s]	Brazil
9	Educação Gráfica	Brazil
10	Estudos em Design	Brazil
11	H + D - Habitat Mas Diseño	Mexico
12	infodesign	Brazil
13	Kepes	Colombia
14	La Tadeo de Arte	Colombia
15	Legado de arquitectura y diseño	Mexico
16	MAGDU. Mundo, Arquitectura, Diseño Gráfico y Urbanismo	Mexico
17	ModaPalavra	Brazil
18	Projetica	Brazil
19	RChD. Revista Chilena de Diseño. Creación y Pensamiento	Chile
20	Strategic Design Research Journal - SDRJ	Brazil
21	Virus	Brazil
22	Visualidades	Brazil
23	Zincografía	Mexico

- Innovative articles format.

The analysis is not aimed at comparing the selected journals with those from GN countries, but rather to compare research features among the presented case studies. For this reason, we did not consider impact factors and similar metrics.

The selection criteria for scientific conferences are:

- Frequency, at least 1 edition in the last two years;
- Established for at least 5 years;
- Divulgation of the results through journals, proceedings, books;
- Declaration of the scientific and organising committees.

We considered only design-focused conferences.

Based on these criteria, the list of national and transnational conferences is shown in Table 2.

Also, conferences are qualitatively analysed in those aspects that offer opportunities for decentring and for making design knowledge production more plural:

- Local dimension (by valorising local contexts);
- Languages;
- Accessibility, in terms of the overall amount of fees and differentiation for young researchers and students;

Table 2. List of selected Latin America Conferences.

N.	Conferences (alphabetical order)	Country
1	BIS	Spain Iberoamerica
2	CIDI - Congresso Internacional de Design da Informação	Brazil
3	COLÓQUIO INTERNACIONAL DE DESIGN	Brazil
4	Congreso de Enseñanza del Diseño	Argentina Iberoamerica
5	DiSUR - PreDiSUR - Red Argentina de Carreras de Diseño en facultades nacionales	Argentina Latin America
6	ERGODESIGN & USIHC - Congresso Internacional de Ergonomia e Usabilidade de Interfaces Humano-Tecnologia: Produtos, Informação, Ambiente Construído, Transportes	Brazil
7	P&D Design - Congresso Brasileiro de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento em Design	Brazil
8	SDS - Simpósio Brasileiro de Design Sustentável (SBDS) e Simpósio Internacional de Design Sustentável (ISSD)	Brazil International
9	SIGRADI - International Conference of the Iberoamerican Society of Digital Graphic	Iberoamerica

- Innovative formats;
- Networking activities.

Discussion

Although certain comments pertain to both journals and conferences, we opt to separate the discussion.

Journals

With regard to journal indexing, for LA countries, it is important to consider the LATINDEX: it encompasses not only Central and South American countries but Latin countries in a broader sense, based on Latin language (including Spain and Portugal). Furthermore, according to the criteria expressed by Rico-Castro and Bonora (EC (European Commission) 2023), other indexing databases have been alternatively considered: SciELO, Redalyc, DOAJ.

Generally, however, LA journals lack international indexing: only 4 are SCOPUS and 1 Web of Science, and the others have mainly local indexing. Accreditation is therefore warranted by the reliability of many University Press publishers (all journals are published by UP).

The review process was a mandatory criterion for the journals in the selected list but it is not always fully declared and explained in detail. Most journals adopt a double-anonymous peer review process.

The average lifetime of LA journals is greater than 15 years. Still, many digital journals have been established over the past decade, and especially between 2013-2016, following the massive adoption of digital publishing platforms such as the Open Journal System. In the same time, many printed journals turned

digital. This phenomenon was strictly anchored to Open Access policy strategies developed in the mid-2010s both in Europe and LA countries (Vicente-Saez and Martinez-Fuentes 2018, EC (European Commission) 2023). The Open Journal System (OJS) adoption implied a standardisation of journal structures, processes and formats. Furthermore, many initiatives – both in the field of journals and conferences – have emerged in recent years (2019-2023), presenting a high level of attention towards the quality criteria used for this study, demonstrating a new trend towards journal accountability.

In conclusion, we excluded some journals for several reasons: too recently established, not indexed, non-reviewed and no longer active.

In terms of the language they adopt, almost all journals declare that they are multilingual, and accept submissions in English, Spanish and Portuguese. However, two different types of behaviour emerge: most of the journals have only English abstracts and full text in LA languages; on the contrary, some multilingual journals have started to publish only fully English articles, especially those indexed in SCOPUS or WOS: it is clear that the international indexing system tends to standardise language.

With regards to accessibility and visibility, all journals do not apply APC or fee and are fully Open Access, but they do not declare if they offer preferential/reserved venues for publishing for young researchers.

In terms of the local dimension, based on the definition of design-related journals, the topics are very broad-ranging and reflect the different specialisations and local contexts of design research in LA countries. In any case, it has not been possible to quantitatively assess the data for special issue topics, because some contents were not accessible. In addition, based on the purpose of this paper, we did not perform a quantitative analysis of the keywords for all the articles: a more systematic approach could be useful to better assess the valorisation of local design research.

Finally, we observed the publication format, looking for innovative strategies to support early-stage researcher publishing. As previously stated, none of the journals have established a special venue for young researchers (like the PhD Report of *The Design Journal*), and the OJS adoption implied a standardisation of formats. The only alternatives are interviews (sometimes not peer-reviewed) and visual essays, and they are very scarce. Our study's further limitation is the lack of quantitative analysis on the editorial board composition of the 23 journals to assess their pluriversal balance. This step, mirroring research in other fields such as economics by Baccini and Re (2024), is planned for our ongoing study.

Conferences

With regard to design-focused conferences, they have a long history in LA, especially in design education: some have reached the 14th edition.

In terms of scope, some are national, others have an international dimension among South American countries, and 3 include Ibero-American nations.

All conferences have publication fees that are relatively high compared with LA countries' currency[7] and do not offer a discount rate for early-stage researchers.

The peer review process is not always declared nor clearly described.

They all publish proceedings, mainly in books with local publishers.

Similar to conferences, we set the presence of a scientific and organising committee as a requirement for selection, but we did not quantitatively and qualitatively assess its composition in terms of geographical representation.

At the very end, this study emphasizes the challenges faced by researchers in LA regions. Evaluation for design research publishing (both in journals and conferences) in LA countries is based primarily on peer review, but the process and criteria are not always clearly explained, nor address concerns about a balance in geographical disparity and career stage equity. The study also points out that the journals' lack of indexing and impact scores limits their scientific advancement, hindering their ability to challenge the dominance of knowledge generated primarily in the GN and, on the contrary, pushes towards standardisation (of languages, for instance).

This analysis serves as a reference for the Forum (hereafter presented), which consequently seeks to explore and experiment with practical approaches how to enhance pluriversality in design publishing.

The 8th international forum of design as a process: A case study for increasing accessibility through inclusive evaluation criteria

This case study investigates the publishing process of the 8th International Forum of Design as a Process as community-led knowledge process, including the methodology of validation and evaluation employed for the Proceedings.

As previously anticipated, the LN represents a community of scholars meeting in biannual Forums, conceived as thematic conferences, that enable an exchange of research (a network of over 500 international attendees since the first edition). The 8th Forum thus serves as a research testbed: this academic collaboration signifies an unprecedented effort to instigate discussions on global challenges and re-think contexts, tools, and methodologies to innovate the traditional system of scientific knowledge production, evaluation and dissemination in the field of design starting from LA countries.

We conscientiously acknowledge the potential for inadvertent bias stemming from our geographical location within the Western or GN context. Despite this awareness, we were consistent in avoiding (or attempting to)

the risk of falling into dualistic Western rational thinking. Thus, we are not contra posing but suggesting a complementary model for better distributing the process of knowledge production (that is also still partial and not fully resolved in the way it applies only some aspects of the multifaceted concept of pluriverse).

The Forum has been an opportunity to re-think the LN system in response to evolving paradigms in knowledge production and dissemination, encompassing a pluriversal approach by:

- the selection of the main theme;
- the conference's organization (the partners involved; the criteria for selecting speakers; the call for submission; the open access system to valorise publications; the registrations fees);
- the process underpinning peer review.

First, the Forum's central theme, 'Disrupting Geographies in the Design World' aimed to gather reflections and investigations addressing how design principles and practices can adapt to the diversity characterizing the contemporary world. To explore potential answers, the Forum brought together analyses and experiences from several territories worldwide, facilitating the connection of diverse cultural influences and their impact on design-driven innovation pathways. The conference featured five distinct tracks[8], each exploring various aspects of a global design future, with one track specifically focused on 'Design Values Out of the Mainstream: New Geographies of Influence'.

Secondly, the organization of the conference embraced a novel approach to enhance international collaboration by establishing official connections among three universities within the LN: Università di Bologna (the host University), Tecnològico de Monterrey, and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile intensifying relations among Europe, Central and South America. It took place in Bologna in June 2022.

Moreover, this collaborative methodology aligns with the Forum's visions including the selection of keynote speakers as it involved convenors[9] from the Global Design community, extending the original vocation of the Latin cultures to researchers and designers from the Mediterranean Area, Middle East, IOR (Indian Ocean Region), and GS regions, to build strategic partnerships and create accessible knowledge.

Participation in the Forum was initiated through a global Call for Submissions, extending invitations to scholars, practitioners, and researchers to submit Long Abstracts and Full Papers in English[10]. The Call was distributed through the contacts of the LN and partner institutions, including those in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean Region without imposing any geographical or linguistic constraints. However, the effective inclusivity of the

call can be discussed: we recognize that accessibility is not solely determined by the topic and geographical distribution. We tried to give visibility to the call both in terms of quantity (LN) and quality (institutional and non-institutional channels), but the issue still needs further development.

Following the successful conclusion of the Forum, the Proceedings were published in open access[11]. The publishing venue is the Italian-based open-access design journal *diid. disegno industriale industrial design*, which in collaboration with the Editors of the 8th Forum introduced a set of criteria for evaluating the submitted Full Papers. Though the traditional submission system was developed in Europe, which may inherently introduce biases (Feliciani et al. 2019), the review process adopted contextual factors:

- Increasing publishing accessibility and visibility for early-career researchers (Graduate students, PhD students, post-doc) from LMICs;
- Experimenting with an evaluation framework for the peer review process of the full papers that challenges the Western orthodoxy of academic standards and norms of rigour and relevance (Reiter, 2019).

Accessibility for Early Career Researchers from LMICs

In reviewing the outputs of the 8th Forum, the evaluation met the need to increase the number of discussion spaces devoted to early-career researchers, with particular attention to the ones based in LMICs. They still struggle to publish in reputable international journals or conferences due to poor results from editorial and peer review processes, which often neglect cultural knowledge or local contextualisation, resulting in a hierarchy of scientific values from high-income countries (Kieńć 2017, Nicholas et al. 2017, Reiter 2019). Early-career researchers' lack of publishing literacy is increasingly pushing them towards 'predatory journals' (Mouton and Valentine 2017). Considering that rejection rates of most high-impact factor journals remain high, publishers might need to be more flexible in terms of acceptability to allow for a more diverse research visibility.

In this context, the editorial process of the Proceedings prioritised the valorisation of local knowledge, often characterising research topics from LMICs. Moreover, the Editorial Board acknowledged the Forum as a publishing space for non-English native speakers, inviting reviewers to evaluate the submissions based on the research content, to avoid penalisation for grammar and language mistakes.

Evaluation framework

The Proceedings underwent a single-anonymous form of peer review. Acknowledging the potential challenges and concerns associated with this

form of peer review, particularly regarding competition and conflicts of interest, the Editors carefully considered this approach. Generally, double-blind peer review is the most used methodology, but in this case, the single-anonymous review was employed to allow reviewers to perform an informed validation of a non-Western article. In addition, concerns have been devoted to mitigating any drift of inclusivity attempts to domestication or anthropologization of 'other' knowledge (Reiter, 2019).

Furthermore, as previously discussed, this method was adopted to enhance accessibility for young researchers from non-Western countries, mitigating the risk of biased evaluations influenced by language or regional factors. This decision reflects a broader commitment to foster a fair and inclusive evaluation process within the scholarly community.

Nevertheless, the evaluation criteria of the Proceedings' peer review were consistent with those regularly employed for the submissions in the *diid* Journal. They considered:

- Originality and Relevance
- Congruence with the Design field
- Scientific rigour
- Relationship to Literature
- Methodology
- Results and Conclusion
- Quality of Communication
- Final Comments to the Author and Suggestions

These criteria were applied to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process, maintaining the standards acknowledged for international conference Proceedings. However, along the whole process, the two criteria of relevance and scientific rigour were often challenging: non-Western contributions are often supposed to lack academic rigour, but standards elevated as universal by Western thinking were questioned. Therefore, reviewers were committed to evaluating relevance based on contextual knowledge, local design, community-led projects, responsible innovation, social justice, and ecocentrism, while avoiding romanticising them. They also committed to assessing scientific rigour without downsizing it in favour of GS knowledge with the risk of endorsing dualist logic. For this aspect the partnership with the two LA universities was crucial.

Finally, reviewers were carefully selected to mitigate conflicts of interest.

Results based on the adopted evaluation model

The Forum received 134 submissions; 54% were submitted from researchers affiliated with Universities in the GS/LMIC (Table 3); the substantial number

of submissions from Italy can be attributed to the conference being hosted there. The geographical proximity of the conference venue encouraged local scholars to submit their work, as attending a conference in their own country is more convenient and cost-effective.

The proceedings of the Conference represent a concrete opportunity for researchers from GS/LMIC to present their scientific contributions and to coexist in a pluriverse-seeking context instead of being merely recognised by the design community of the dominant discourse. We can argue that the gained visibility for Early Career Researchers from LMICs is not barely a numerical increment of geographical representation but the encouraging result of a more conscious evaluation framework, even if still experimental and empirical.

Based on the evaluation framework employed, the peer review process resulted in a 95% acceptance rate of full papers submitted for publication; considering the number of early-career researchers in the Forum (Table 4), the results of the review process are encouraging: 33% Accept, 38% Minor Revision, 20% Major Revision, 4% Reject.

To broaden the range of participants involved in knowledge dynamics, early-career researchers from the Università di Bologna were fully engaged in the Forum's backstage operations. In addition, low registration fees for early-stage career researchers (graduate students, PhD students, post-doc) and the hybrid mode of the Conference up to free-of-charge publication aimed at reducing the inequality and accessibility gap caused by economic issues.

Table 3. A geographical overview of the Long Abstract submissions received for the 8th International Forum of Design as a Process – titled 'Disrupting Geographies in the Design World'.

Australia	2
Brazil	13
Canada	3
Chile	6
China	1
Colombia	8
Egypt	2
Finland	1
India	1
Italy	63
Lebanon	1
Mexico	5
Portugal	9
Singapore	1
Spain	2
Sweden	1
Switzerland	3
Iran	1
Turkey	4
UAE	1
UK	4
Uruguay	1
US	1

Table 4. Overview of the authors listed in the submissions received based on their career stage.

	Early-career	Regular
Track 1	28	22
Track 2	29	31
Track 3	25	13
Track 4	12	25
Track 5	25	74

Conclusions and future research directions

This paper has addressed the need to increase access and visibility to researchers from LMICs and GS Countries (in particular LA), in a geopolitical knowledge and publishing system affected by ethnocentrism and Western hegemony. Proposing new evaluation methodologies that tie international conferences to publishing venues, we discuss the established publishing structures and aim to make them more permeable in favour of a more pluriversal design knowledge that better distributes the knowledge production process.

The LA ecosystem of design publishing (journals and conferences) has been qualitatively analysed and shows attempts in decentering design publishing, but still evident limits in terms of indexing and clarity in the review process. Our proposal wants to offer alternatives to complement it and the 8th Forum has offered an experiment targeting the LN and GS countries to update the traditional framework of peer review processes based on Western-centric values: authors' provenance and career stage have been made transparent to reviewers, but warning about domesticating behaviours. The statistical data shows that a more flexible evaluation framework of submissions has allowed more than 90 early-stage career researchers from 11 countries of the LMIC/GS to present and publish their research.

However, increasing the accessibility to international research venues might be only a partial solution to address inequality in research, as it marks an initial move towards enhancing actors' and participants' capabilities in knowledge production dynamics. In addition, language concerns persist, as adopting English as the primary language, though facilitating wider dissemination, may diminish the richness of expression in Latin American languages, encouraging bilingual processes to address this.

Therefore, for the academic growth of LMIC researchers, a transition from plurality to pluriversity remains a critical factor and requires further support.

We propose that distributing more equitably knowledge leadership can lead to a practical interpretation of pluriversity in publishing: it implies enabling self-advocacy in knowledge production and evaluation, sharing values and responsibilities among the whole publishing ecosystem actors. The 8th Forum constitutes a first attempt to apply in practice some of the principles underlying this interpretation of pluriversality and its theoretical stances: we

tried to give a qualitative multifaceted meaning to the term pluriverse paradigm in research publication and measurable features to the concept of distributed knowledge processes.

Nevertheless, we are aware that the evaluation framework proposed is a tentative initiative to propose new hierarchies innovating publishing processes pushing forward standards, cross-disciplinary practices and self-advocacy in knowledge development. The paper embraces the concept of pluriverse and applies it critically to inform the publishing process, resulting in a methodology and a statement of practice that can contribute to better-managing knowledge dispersion in design and pave the way to future work.

Both the problematisation of the pluriverse and its practice in design publishing can be further developed. The research will continue to seek unconventional perspectives in the next Forums to measure how refined and progressive changes in the publishing processes will impact long-term elaborations of pluriverse design knowledge.

Notes

1. The term 'Global South' refers to countries, often in the Southern Hemisphere, characterized by lower socio-economic development, emerging from post-colonial studies and geopolitical discussions (Escobar 1995). Though not geographically univocal, it highlights disparities with the Global North. Some scholars argue it risks reinforcing outdated stereotypes (Prys-Hansen 2023). Aware of these debates, we also use the World Bank's definition (2023), which classifies low-income economies.
2. For an overall representation of the LN, see: https://www.forumdesignprocess.org/dgdw22/past-editions/.
3. It is important to specify that the LN includes, as effective members, the following countries: France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. However, the LN has opened its community to worldwide contribution.
4. We employed a qualitative approach, using open-ended email inquiries to gather information on journal titles, directories, repositories, and conferences. No predefined prompts or forms were provided for a more flexible response.
5. These countries are deemed more representative of the LN, reintroducing an element of subjectivity bias into the process.
6. The aspects have been collected by the journals' websites.
7. Around 300 euro.
8. https://www.forumdesignprocess.org/dgdw22/track/.
9. https://www.forumdesignprocess.org/dgdw22/keynote-speakers/.
10. The Forum started to publish fully in English since 2010. In the first two editions it was possible to present using various native LA languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, etc. The shift towards English was meant not to penalise local languages but to increase the diffusion and visibility of the Forum scientific community and knowledge worldwide.
11. https://www.diid.it/diid/index.php/diid/issue/view/diid-dsi-1.

Disclosure statement

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