Arturo Escobar

Designs for the Pluriverse. Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 312

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Arturo Escobar's *Designs for the Pluriverse* might look like an unusual book for an anthropologist. Rather than the usual suspects of anthropological theory, the book extensively discusses works by design theorists. Escobar explores the relevance of these theorists in efforts to make livable worlds by indigenous, feminist, and decolonial social movements in Latin America and beyond. These movements include the Zapatista and Columbian Afrodescendant movements, as well as transition town initiatives in the Global North, to name just a few. These movements aspire to a pluriverse, "a world where many worlds fit," to replace the modernist world that has homogenized and destroyed diverse ways of inhabiting the planet.

While the book has stirred up enthusiasm among designers across the globe, its truly interdisciplinary nature might be perplexing for some anthropologist readers who know Escobar primarily as the author of *Encountering Development* and other works in critical anthropology. (This is exactly what I have observed in my home country, Japan.) However, in my view, *Designs for the Pluriverse* offers an alternative mode of critical scholarship that is much needed today to respond to our worsening climate and ecological crisis. In this review, I will provide an overview of the two central points of significance of the book for reimagining critical practice. One concerns the shift from knowing to making, and the other the need for "sophisticated conjunctions" of different knowledges to tackle the unprecedented challenges of our ecological present (Jensen and Morita 2020; Jensen 2021). *Designs for the Pluriverse* itself exemplifies how these two themes are inseparably entangled and serve as scaffolding for the book's call for a shift toward making other worlds possible.

The ever-deepening ecological crises in the past few decades seem to have fundamentally altered our understanding and expectation of the modern world, especially the fundamental unsustainability of a world run by fossil capitalism. If there is any shared feeling in the Global North today, it might be the sense of losing the ground upon which everyday life and the expectation of the future are built on (Latour 2017). One salient future of today's predicament is the close linkage between this everyday sense of uprootedness with planetary processes. The proposed geological epoch of the Anthropocene points to the fundamental destabilization of the ground by illuminating how the planetary environment itself has been shaken by human activities, particularly those driven by the imperative of unlimited economic growth. This destabilization also has direct consequences for the

way critical scholarship operates. Bruno Latour has once noted that in the modernist ontology that presupposes the separation between a single reality and multiple human views on it, critical practice concerns revealing the singular real that is hidden by beliefs, political agendas, or ideologies. In other words, the critical move that aspires for deconstructing beliefs and ideologies itself rests on the assumption that the firm ground of reality exists relatively independent from human action (Latour 1999). But when the planetary ground itself is shaken by the unintended consequences of our collective actions, how can critical scholars find such a ground?

Designs for the Pluriverse contains a response to this question. The book urges designers, anthropologists, and other critical scholars to join forces with social movements that call for just and sustainable worlds. Here the Zapatista call for "a world where many worlds fit" epitomizes the book's commitment not only to these radical movements but also to shifting the focus of critical scholarship. While the world in the modern sense, or what John Law (2015) calls the one-world world, now appears as a destructive force for not only indigenous worlds but also itself, critical scholarship can no longer draw on the world that resides "out there" to justify its political vision. Rather, as Escobar repeatedly asks in this book, critical engagement should concern foregrounding, sustaining, and strengthening other forms of worlding that nurture and draw on relational ontologies of the mutual constitution of humans and nonhumans. Here the question of ontologies becomes a normative one with an urgent call to act.

Escobar's normative take on ontologies draws on an unlikely combination of political ontology by the anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (2018) and ontological design by Terry Winograd, the American computer and cognitive scientist, and Fernando Flores, the Chilean engineer and philosopher who served as finance minister in Allende's government. On the one hand, de la Cadena and Blaser raise the question of many worlds in the context of indigenous communities' struggle to protect their territories in Latin America, where, just like so many other places, extractive capitalism increasingly threatens to destroy their livelihood and communal relations. While shedding light on complex entanglements between people and their non-human companions such as animals, landforms, and landscapes, de la Cadena and Blaser argue that indigenous practices enact worlds, configurations of humans and non-humans, in distinct ways that do not fall into the western ontological distinction between nature and culture, subject and object (Omura et al. 2018). In collaboration with indigenous activists, these authors aspire to defend these worlds from the brutal force of extractive development. This is an elaborated version of the call for an ontological commitment that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2003: 4) declared almost 20 years ago: "anthropology is consistently guided by this one cardinal value: working to create the conditions for the conceptual, I mean ontological, self-determination of people".

While political ontology provides the vision for *Designs for the Pluriverse*, ontological design offers a means to achieve it. Following Winograd and Flores, Escobar directs attention to the way designed objects, tools, and systems design back their users and thus remake the world. The design of a tool, for example, assumes a certain work organization that embodies a taken-for-granted understanding of how humans and nonhumans relate with each other. Thus, designing a new tool is consequential for the sociomaterial order by either reproducing or possibly disrupting it. With Winograd and Flores, Escobar notes that the current practice of designing is deeply entrenched in the modern dualist ontology and thus the major task for pluriversal design is bringing about and exploring "breakdowns" that suspend the dominant idea of how the world operates.

Here the key question of critical scholarship shifts from how we can know other worlds to how we can make space for other worlds to emerge. By making new objects, organizations or systems, design can potentially bring about breakdowns to create this space. In terms of this focus on making, *Designs for the Pluriverse* resonates with the growing body of experimental literature that sees collaboration and making as a form of critical exploration. Escobar in fact reviews this trend, particularly the work of Tim Ingold and the emergent field of design anthropology. In addition, the past few years has witnessed the further expansion of experimental works in anthropology and science and technology studies (STS) that engage making and creative practice (Jungnickel 2020). These efforts try to integrate hands-on experience of making into critical exploration of socio-material orders (Ratto 2011), often through ethnographic practice that essentially draws on collaboration with others (Estalella and Sánchez Criado 2018).

Indeed, whether critical scholarship can shift toward making is a central question of *Designs for the Pluriverse.* Chapter 3 of the book overviews recent debates on ontologies in anthropology and beyond. As Escobar concludes, there are already rich and diverse works that critically examine the dualist ontology of modernity, diagnose it as the main cause of the climate and ecological crises, and explore non-dualist alternatives. However, Escobar questions whether such critical efforts, including *Designs for the Pluriverse* itself, still remain within the modern dualism since they are mostly theoretical discourses. Citing the biologist and cognitive scientist Francisco Varela and his colleagues, Escobar argues that an embodied sort of reflection *as* experience, not *on* experience, is needed to shift away from modern dualism (p. 98). He notes: "*the practice of transformation* really takes place in the process of enacting other worlds/practice — that is, in changing radically the ways in which we encounter things and people, not just theorizing about such practice" (p. 99, emphasis original). Design theory seems to play an important role for this embodied reflection. On the one hand, design theory is scholarly reflection on the practice of designing and making. In this regard it is not so different from other theories. But at the same

time, as Donald Schön (1983) noted a long time ago, this theoretical reflection also participates in the embodied practice of making as a guideline, vocabulary, or framework. In this regard, design as reflective practice hints at what embodied reflection would look like.

In the argument of *Designs for the Pluriverse*, the conversation between widely different traditions, from theories in the academic disciplines of anthropology and design, to the practices and thought of social movements, plays a key role. Casper Bruun Jensen (2021) recently noted that the planetary crisis of the Anthropocene reveals the insufficiency of existing disciplines and categories, and demands new alliances between different knowledges. What Jensen sees as important in this alliance is not an integration of different knowledges into one coherent framework. Rather, it is the "sophisticated conjunctions" of knowledges that allow different knowledges to co-exist and influence each other while retaining their respective distinctiveness (Jensen and Morita 2020). *Designs for the Pluriverse* exemplifies the significance of such a sophisticated conjunction to imagine a new form of critical practice and to also tackle the unprecedented challenges of our time.

As the ground for our modern life, including an academic one, slowly crumbles, anthropology will need to find new ways to keep its commitment to "the ontological self-determination of the world's peoples" (Viveiros de Castro 2003, 17), possibly without such a stable ground as existed in modernist ontologies. In the place of academic privilege to reflect on the world, *Designs for the Pluriverse* offers a new alliance with designers, social movements, and indigenous communities to continue pursuing this pluriversal ambition. The practice of design and making that materially and conceptually opens up space for other worlds to emerge plays a central role in this endeavor. With authors such as Kat Jungnickel (2020) and Adolfo Estalella and Tomás Sánshez Criado (2018), *Designs for the Pluriverse* breaks new ground where collaborative designing and the making of things, organizations, and events become crucial contributions of critical practice.

Designs for the Pluriverse invites readers to join the collective effort to make other livable and sustainable worlds possible by not only critically thinking, but also making and designing otherwise. The book also demonstrates how sophisticated conjunctions can serve as scaffolding for this pluriversal ambition, and the many changes that would need to occur if we were to follow this path. The ongoing climate crises will certainly force us to change our ways of doing anthropology. But if a world of many worlds is what anthropology is always after, perhaps changing the rest would be worthwhile.

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S. Grosjean and F. Matte (eds.)

Organizational Video-Ethnography Revisited. Making Visible Material, Embodied and Sensory Practices, Cham, Palgrave, 2021, pp. 182

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In the last few years, we have witnessed a *visual turn* (Hassard et al. 2018) in organizational studies thanks to the flourishing Video-Ethnography (VE) enabling to record and analyze the tacit, material, and embodied aspects of workplace practices. As stated in the introduction of the book, edited by Sylvie Grosjean and Frédérik Matte, both professors of Organizational Communication at University of Ottawa in Canada, VE pursues