

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DESIGN ORGANIZATIONS: NETWORKS, POLITICS AND POLICIES

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Issue #23 of *AIS/Design: Storia e Ricerche* calls for historical and critical investigations into national, transnational and international Design Organizations, their networks, politics and policies.

For more than a century, designers have gathered across the globe in professional and promotional associations at both local, national and international levels. These associations have frequently been formed by the need individual practitioners encountered to promote design and clarify its importance as a field of practice to wider audiences but also in an effort to establish it as distinct professional practice, with its own rules and codes of conduct. They have worked as gatekeepers thereby establishing who to include or otherwise exclude from the design discourse, with memberships encompassing individuals practitioners, associations and stakeholders in adjacent fields such as education, culture and commerce.

It is said that the first organisations dedicated to the promotion and development of design practice were established in Western Europe, on account of its industrial development. From the second half of the nineteenth century, organisations aiming to promote the improvement of standards of national design in industrial production became common in the region. However, as explained by historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, certain categories and concepts whose genealogies “go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe”, are so entangled with the idea of modernity that it becomes impossible to address modernity without them, in such a way that European thought becomes “both indispensable and inadequate” when addressing “the various life practices that constitute the political and the historical” (2000, pp. 4-6).

Histories of professionalisation and of the formation of professional organisations have not yet been approached from the perspective that professionalisation—and the organisations that derive from it—were part of European social structures, which were not—and could not have been—common in the Americas, Africa and Oceania. Therefore, it would be difficult to think of design as a modern professional practice, originating anywhere else but in Europe, which does not mean that there was no design practice elsewhere. The issue at stake is that the practice of design outside of Europe was not, in the early twentieth century, organised in the same way as it was in Europe, and that fact seems to have been overlooked as have the practices in these regions. It is also important to consider that, as stressed by sociologist Aníbal Quijano in nations that have been colonised, native forms of social organisation and local knowledge have been suppressed and substituted by the coloniser's social structures, eliminating knowledge about their stories and forms of social organisation predating colonisation.

Looking at design as a profession without considering such factors, therefore, presents a risk within itself, as it could limit the comprehension of the development of design practice beyond European soil. However, understanding the formation of professional design organisations offers an opportunity to locate the symbolic systems and conventions established by them, enabling a better understanding of the development of design into a discipline and a profession. Moreover, it might help to elucidate the ways in which particular views of design became perceived to be of universal significance and value, and, therefore, allow for a critical analysis of these views.

The tradition of professional associations in European, Indian and Muslim cultures dates back to Medieval times, when social groups, craftsmen and merchants organised themselves into guilds (Black,1984; Lewis,1937). With industrial development, these traditions enabled the development of trade unions, schools, professional associations and so on, that were particularly relevant for designers. Early organisations, promotional in their nature, usually included both industrialists and practitioners, and they also made no distinction between specialisations within design practice. It was between 1900 and the 1930s that the fields of product design and graphic design started taking shape as we came to know them. However, it was after the end of the Second World War that the number design associations that fitted the European model had the most significant international expansion and that design became part of governmental strategies for modernisation and development in a number of countries.

Even though the end of the Second World War resulted in a divided world, the establishment of transnational organisations for peacekeeping changed the political landscape. The foundation of the United Nations in 1945 prompted a global political turn that transformed the nature of the relationships between nation-states and people, enabling a new set of beliefs to develop and agendas to change and expand from promotion and advocacy for professionalization to wider debates such as responding to global concerns. The fora held by these associations have served as fertile ground for pivotal debates on design and its relation to wider issues of varied nature highlighting design's disciplinary transversality spanning

economics, cybernetics, biology, behavioral sciences, culture and society at large. We believe that the study of design organizations can help further demonstrate the nature of exchanges taking place within their scope of action, be it through the investigation within archives of associations with global ambitions such as ICSID (ArchivesHub, ICSID, n.d.), Icograda (Archives Hub, Icograda, n.d.) or through the analysis of the archive and files kept by national design associations themselves. We are interested in contributions that explore design association as platforms for encounters between different cultures, be it when people from different backgrounds meet but also when people encounter different cultures via readings, travelling, objects and so on.

Significant work has already been done on the topic of design organizations, among which we can mention—among other noteworthy contributions—volumes such as *International Design Organizations: Histories, Legacies, Values* edited by Jeremy Aynsley, Alison Clarke, and Tania Messell (2022) which have shed light on significant chapters of this history considering their role as platforms for networking, knowledge sharing, professional development, and advocacy within the design industry and beyond. Yet, we believe more can be said about the inner and outer workings of design societies and the unfolding of political dimensions of design relationships and exchanges. Therefore, it is essential to address this historical gap through detailed studies that can illuminate the internal and external dynamics of design organizations, exploring their reciprocal influences and their impact on the global landscape. We ask: how have these associations and their actors operated and/or still operate? What are their missions and values? How did their actions reflect their discourse?

Proposals should maintain a historical or historiographical perspective at their core and may consider various aspects and themes, such as:

- histories of national design organizations, in particular from so far overlooked countries and geographies;
- histories of international design organizations (chapters of these untold histories not yet studied);
- histories of organizations representing and advocating for design disciplines besides industrial design;
- the relationship between design organisations and national government policies, commercial interests and business, as well as non-design Organizations such as UN and National and International Organizations;
- histories of design awards, conferences, events, transnational exchanges, publications and journals connected to the design organizations (for example, Compasso D'Oro, Interdesign, World Design Capitals);
- investigations into the impact of design organizations beyond the professional spheres with a focus on how they sought to solve global issues (examples SDG (UN) and WDO, Montreal Declaration and Ico-D);

- the construction, negotiation and mediation of design discourses that have been regarded as global and how these have been received by the local practices with a focus on power dynamics between Southern and Northern actors;
- Histories of individual members and their roles within the design organizations.

OTHER TOPICS

In addition to research papers and essays responding to the thematic call, *AIS/Design: Storie e Ricerche* will also welcome contributions unrelated to the monographic theme. These contributions (with a maximum of two per issue) will be featured in the section of the journal titled “Other Topics” and will follow the same submission procedures and deadlines as the proposals responding to the issue’s theme.

CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Submissions responding to the thematic call as well as proposals for the section titled “Other Topics” must be the result of original research, based on the examination of primary sources or on the analysis of theories, methodological tools, and historiographical issues.

Contributions that do not align with the objectives of the journal issue, that have already been considered by other publications, that have appeared in journals or books in Italian or other languages, or that are reproductions, either in wording or content, of previously published works may be rejected without peer review.

Submissions are welcome in Italian and **English**.

PROPOSAL (LONG ABSTRACT): PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

Proposals must be submitted in the form of a **long abstract**, to be sent **by May 4, 2025**.

The document (maximum 1200 words [8000 characters]) must be prepared using the “[AISD-template ENG LongAbstract.doc](#)” **template**.

Authors are also required to send an **anonymised version** of their proposal.

Authors are required to fill in the template according to the instructions provided therein, and to follow the **Guidelines for Authors** available [here](#).

After receiving the evaluation of the long abstract, authors – in case of acceptance – will be invited to submit the full paper, which will undergo a second stage of peer review.

Proposals are to be sent to: **journal@aisdesign.org**

DEADLINES

The various submission and revision phases will follow this schedule:

May, 4th: Long abstract submission.

May, 25th: Acceptance transmission.

Sept, 1st: Full paper submission.

Oct, 1st: End of the peer review process and return to the authors.

Nov, 9th: Final paper delivery.

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