Chapter 26
The Road Ahead

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Abstract Scholars and international institutions have noted that toward making the world more habitable and humane, we need to be mindful about anthropocentric activities and be proactive to raise ecological/environmental consciousness. In other words, we need to diligently engage and invest in designing meaningful solutions for all to co-create contextually appropriate outcomes and sustained access to resources and services, particularly when the Global South is experiencing severe disparities (including multidimensional poverty) and gaps in terms of power, structure, and resources. The impacts of these inadvertently shape up the forms that are designed or built by the people, be it product, environment, policy, or any artifact to run the society. Another delinquency is the perceptual, conceptual, and cognitive gaps, which often (influenced by Eurocentric conceptualizations) portray the knowledge and knowledge production processes of the Global South as inferior (if not pseudoscientific). It is therefore important for the design scholarship to recognize and understand various gaps that need to be bridged; they include—value-/ideology-related gaps; priority-, preference, and intention-related gaps, as well as cognitive-, thought process- and perception-related gaps. The issue of lack of access (to the environmental resources, to income and employment, and to basic infrastructures, among others), unfairness, and illegitimacy is quadrupled in the developing world due to illiteracy (including functional, computational, ecological, and cultural illiteracy) and lack of plurality of language, which divide the Global North and the Global South. Moreover, intercultural incompetence, lack of critical listening, and lack of reflexive dialogic engagement farther worsen the scenario. This chapter envisions a few approaches and calls for prudent use of these approaches or principles to make this world a better place to live in, including co-design and co-creation; community-centered an agency-centric approach; de-colonial and de-westernization approach; contextually/locally meaningful solutions; communicative engagements; intercultural competence; unlearning, relearning,

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and co-learning; transdisciplinary and multisensory approach; and ethics and reflexivity.

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Sustainable development goals (SDG) of the United Nations as well as other international missions are diligently working toward making the world more habitable and humane. In doing so, on one hand, we need to be mindful about anthropocentric activities and be proactive to raise ecological/environmental consciousness. On the other hand, we need to actively engage and invest in designing meaningful solutions for all to co-create contextually appropriate outcomes, as well as to ensure adequate and sustained access to resources and services especially in the spaces of the Global South. Engaged involvement in such inclusive and socially embedded missions is a need of the hour, particularly when the Global South is experiencing severe disparities and gaps in terms of power, structure, and resources. Some of such obstacles and/or absences have been identified as discussed later, and some still remains obscure. The impacts of these inadvertently shape up the forms that are designed or built by the people, be it product, environment, policy, or any artifact to run the society. These get apparent in visible and usable forms and thus start creating a marked difference in terms of the Global North and Global South or any other terminology which refers to this phenomenon of perceptible difference. For example, the cars designed by the local companies of the developing countries are often questioned for its environmental efficiency, safety, and comfort. The compromise of these factors is significantly stark in comparison to their Global North counterparts. These reconciliations are often based on the issues, discussed further, which characterize the Global South. The way forward for the design and development requires careful attention and meaningful interpretation of the same.

Many spaces of the Global South are experiencing scarcity of resources and material disparities, which are potential precursors to multidimensional poverty (a measure to understand overlapping human deprivations in education, health, and standard of living) particularly at the margins. In this twenty-first century, many people of the Global south are still fighting for survival, particularly to overcome abject poverty and hunger. Poverty intertwined with disparities in the distribution of wealth, taxation, and policies related to poverty alleviation and related governmental or nongovernmental mechanisms constantly influences the design and development of the developing countries. The built environment takes up the largest share of this biased growth; a walk around the city reveals the signs of poverty. One such common view is presence of slums, shabby temporary shelters of poor people encroaching the streets, and vacant pockets of land. Such formations are unheard of in the Global North. Multidimensional poverty shapes up such built-up environment in the Global South.

Along with poverty, another delinquency is the perceptual, conceptual, and cognitive gaps. Eurocentric conceptualizations often portray the knowledge and knowledge production processes of the Global South as inferior (if not pseudoscientific). It is therefore important for the design scholarship to recognize and understand various gaps that need to be bridged; they include—value-/ideology-related gaps; priority-, preference, and intention-related gaps; as well as cognitive-, thought process, and perception-related gaps. This particular topic has been discussed in-depth in the book. The perceptual issues related to the Global South need exposure to wider global audience for its deeper understanding and thus putting "label" to any of the facts and figures of the Global South is rather approximate and relative. The very derivation of the words like Global South or Global North has been the fruit of these perceptual gaps. Today, the perception of a place in comparison to another is perhaps not the best way to evaluate anymore. For example, a meager vernacular building of a tropical region in the developing country should not be judged for its energy efficiency in contrast to or in a scale, which relates to the mechanized active climate-controlled building of the "west." The perception of that dwelling is unique and self-contained in its own way; it should not call for semantic elucidation based on perception, such as "traditional," "redundant," "inefficient," etc.

SDGs and other international initiatives show that lack of access to structure, facilities, and services is one of the key concerns of this hour; they include access to environmental resources, access to income and employment, and access to basic infrastructures, among others. These issues are intimately intertwined to governance and transparency; for example, increasing social injustice, inequality, and conflicts across the globe are some of the deeper concerns of this contemporary era. For example, the housing shortage is one of the burning issues in the population-heavy Global South. The lack of a proper shelter for living and surviving is predominant; however the available provisions seem to be neither adequate nor affordable or accommodative. In other words, they are provided to people based on some other criteria than the need itself. The transparency is likely to be at stake, consequently rendering the society unsolicited ground of inequality and prejudice.

The issue of unfairness and illegitimacy is quadrupled in the developing world due to illiteracy and lack of plurality of language. Functional illiteracy, computational illiteracy, ecological illiteracy, and cultural illiteracy are some of the major challenges of this era, which divide the Global North and the Global South. Moreover, dominance of mainstream languages (such as English) and rapid disappearance of endangered languages not only hinders the plurality of languages and diversity of cultural expressions but also makes the marginalized population vulnerable to the oppressions and exploitations. The sublime effects of language, as a part of cultural expressions, proliferate into other forms. The vernacular starts appearing useless and inferior as against prevalent forms of ascendency. The urbanization needs to meet this cruel transformation every day. In the quest to a create a fabric of widespread very average permanent houses made out of concrete, steel, and glass, they are advertised profusely, for commercial benefit only. This ingrains the idea into the minds of the people that other forms of buildings are perhaps not

adequate and effectual enough. Of course, here the issue is not just about the invading propaganda, and the parties preaching, it but also with the takers of it, blinded by the layer of illiteracy.

Power-disparity and power-distances are also higher in many places of the Global South (in comparison to the Global North), particularly in those societies, which are collectivistic and vertical in nature. Such contextual realities along with skepticism and mistrust in various discursive spaces potentially pose additional challenges to design research interventions and implementations.

A variety aforementioned gaps, including lack of access to structural and communicative resources along with linguistic and cognitive gaps, essentially constitute (and aggravate) interactive barriers and silences and even cause communicative impossibilities that divide the societies. Moreover, intercultural incompetence, lack of critical listening, and lack of reflexive dialogic engagement farther worsen the scenario. All of these together or in separate parcels start affecting the appearance and formation of the Global South. This assumes a distinct character, but at the same time always gets compared for its inferiority compared to the Global North. The difference would continue to remain and perhaps widen with changing political, economic, and social epicenters. The chapters have highlighted issues, suggested recommendations, and described situations which could be rethought or worth considering in a different approach than the way it is dealt today. In order to overcome the aforementioned absences and disparities, future scholarship might want to pay attention to the following to bring about transformation, emancipation, and empowerment in the Global South.

Co-design and Co-creation As opposed to modernist and universal approaches to design, scholars are increasingly arguing in favor of participatory and co-creating design interventions, where the designers and community members work hand in hand as co-researchers (Kapuire et al. 2010; Nieusma 2004). In contrast to dominant and trickle-down approaches, co-designing interventions seek to reduce dependency on external resources or expertise toward bringing about empowerment and change in the societal spaces (Braund and Schwittay 2006).

Community-Centered and Agency-Centric Approach Challenging the dominant/ hegemonic approaches to design, scholars envision cultural participants as the central organizing elements and active guiding force for community mobilization/organization. Furthermore, in legitimizing and developing local agentic capacities, they have argued in favor of critically examining and de-centering the exogenous experts to bring about transformations in the spaces of the Global South.

De-colonial and De-westernization Approach De-colonial and de-westernization approaches essentially call for questioning and problematizing Eurocentric and hegemonic assumptions by including values, philosophies, practices, experiences, and evidences from the Global South. Moreover, such approaches legitimize local knowledge as wealthy sources of resources and prioritize local autonomy to foster multicultural interactions that are socially embedded and culturally responsive.

Contextually/Locally Meaningful Solutions Inclusive approach such as this pays attention to local knowledge, resources, and skills as well as to situated needs, practices, norms, and cultural participants' aspirations and worldviews. This approach also seeks co-create cost-effective, customized, and sustainable solutions and that too by utilizing locally available social and cultural resources (Galdeano-Gómez et al. 2011).

Communicative Engagements Critical listening and mindful dialogue are key components of meaningful communicative engagements. While the process of listening questions societal power dynamics and taken-for-granted assumptions that foreclose community voices, a dialogic process seeks to ensure respectful and impactful interactive environment that is essential for creating transformation (Ganesh and Zoller 2012; Sorrells 2015). Moreover, such engagements are crucial for bridging communicative and discursive gaps to make design research initiatives open, unobtrusive, and conducive.

Intercultural Competence In the Global South (particularly in the underserved contexts), unforeseen and less known contextual complexities pose challenges to design research. In addressing/overcoming the same, it is often essential to develop intercultural competences and sensitivities. Inculcating and nurturing the qualities like empathy and compassion are crucial to make design approaches and/or interventions inclusive, respectful, and emancipatory.

Unlearning, Relearning, and Co-learning As future researchers and designers, we need to unlearn and introspectively evaluate our embodied ethnocentrism, unearned privileges, as well as unexamined practices that constitute formidable barriers to knowledge production. Such engagements not only would help us in exploring new learning avenues as well as guide us in developing newer theoretical and methodological insights. In addition, future scholarship needs to explore mutual learning endeavors to open up innovative and creative knowledge production/problem-solving avenues.

Transdisciplinary and Multisensory Approach Increasingly professional and academic research interactions are becoming transdisciplinary, where inputs and inferences from multiple paradigms, lenses, and domains intermingle and enrich design outcomes. In addition, it is also important to explore the complexities and nuances of multisensory interactions and alternative design avenues for the future scholarships.

Ethics and Reflexivity Reflexivity and ethics are two key quality designers needed to inculcate and nurture in bringing about responsible and responsive transformations in the Global South. By being reflexive, we question our unexplored privileges and sub-/unconscious senses of superiority as well as use self-introspections to act mindfully and ethically. Being cognizant about our own ethnocentric assumptions potentially prepares ourselves to conduct compassionate, inclusive, and socially embedded research.

Though much of the preceding discussion revolves around design, design should be transcended to a more holistic approach centered around man's encounter with earth for a humanitarian cause. The domain of design is thus vast and is definitely going to play a great role in the twenty-first century (Dunne and Martin 2006; Razzouk and Shute 2012). While negotiating with economic, social, political, and ecological complexities, the challenges of the Global South are pivoted around our ability to meaningfully design the solutions. The built environment is no exception. This particular book looks into different facets of the built, in the Global South, in terms its designed forms related to the environment and perception of people. Many of the chapters hint lacunas, which relate to lack of these approaches, indirectly or try to provide a solution based on these holistic approaches, without necessarily naming them. A way forward requires prudent use of these approaches or principles to make this world a better place to live in. And this is a stepping-stone to perhaps change the discourses on which this book revolves around, the Global South. An earth with no divide is possible only if it is consciously built that way.

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