Introduction

Large-scale transformation projects have so far rather consistently embraced a dirigist, technicistic perspective. Their outcomes are on the other hand meant to be experienced by communities in a direct, engaged manner that is embodied, spatial and temporal. For processes meant to radically transform the lived experience of people, they have so far been strategically unconcerned with any human-centric view.

Workshop purpose and aims

The workshop intends to suggest a necessary shift in perspective through the conceptual lens of pace layers and a system of temporal, spatial, and socio-cultural indicators: place-making, power and plasticity, and proxemics, and discuss the role and responsibilities of design in the production of large-scale systemic change. Questions that will be addressed during the workshop include:

- When scaling up to regional level, does the design discourse belong? If so, when, where, how?
- What role and responsibilities for designers?
- Are designers comfortable with the level of abstraction these projects comport?
- Are current design processes useful or fit for the task?
- Is designing at scale designing for people?

Theoretical relationship

The pace layer model will be used to frame the outcomes of the workshop and guide the participants through the individual activities. Pace layers postulate that different socio-technical superstructures move and change at different speeds.
Participants will be asked to reflect on and formulate how the individual activities relate to the pace layer model. At the end of the session, groups will create a pace layer visualization for their processes, with the general aim of having an organically built representation of what tasks, activities, opportunity and challenges reside in or across what layers when designing at scale. Participants will be asked to consider that:

- in layers with high variability, adaptability should be maximized;
- in layers with low variability, structures should be stabilized;
- if changes happen too fast in a low-variability layer, their effects can become systemically detrimental as they negatively impact other layers.

These points will be recalled at wrap-up to foster reflection, frame the workshop, and further the conversation.

**Activity 1: Placemaking**
A dimension often overlooked in large-scale transformation projects is that addressed by placemaking. A core concept in city planning, placemaking centers on the necessity of designing environments that feel human and that speak to our sense of presence and belonging. While large-scale projects naturally work at the geographical scale, they seem to ignore the general need to meaningfully anchor infrastructure to human activities and the placemaking of the new digital/physical environments they create.

**Activity 2: Power and plasticity**
In cultural terms, power may be considered as control and the expression of biases in choices. Such control may be culturally explicit or tacit. Any call for large-scale transformation is a reflection on whether such efforts should alter or maintain the status quo. Human-centric approaches favor the individual and local bottom-up angle: strategic, policy-driven approaches favor the top-down, collective view. When designing at scale, as we abstract local needs upwards, can top-down structures provide enough plasticity to support cultural variance? What role does design play in avoiding technocratic approaches sidelining social and cultural needs?

**Activity 3: Proxemics and public spaces**
Proxemics is a cultural approach to understanding and representing how people experience space and spatial components and suggests a scalable framework that conceptualizes different interactions through methods of distance-setting. Using De Waal’s three conceptual constructs for exploring proxemics at the level of the public space, the private, parochial and public domains, this activity will have groups figure out the how proxemics can contribute to make large-scale processes more human-centric.

**Workshop approach**
This is an activity-based workshop for 15-30 participants. After an initial welcome moment, the facilitators team up attendees in groups. These groups work on three distinct activities framed through large-scale design problems: the facilitators provide the practical and theoretical framing, a fictional hands-on case, supervision for the duration of the workshop, and finally coordinate the room for take-aways and reflections.

- 00:00 - 00:20 Welcome, introduction
- 20:00 - 35:00 Framing: Pace layers
Takeaways for the participants
Participants will learn how to:
- define the role and responsibilities of design when designing at scale;
- recontextualize the role of technology in large scale transformative projects;
- systemically relate human-scale indicators to large-scale priorities.

Results and final reflections for consideration
The workshop provides attendees with a more mindful, human-scale approach aimed at re-centering large-scale transformation projects around the human elements. Final group reflections will center on how to:
- reduce the gap between the reality of large digital transformation projects and the current research framing and understanding of the problem space;
- challenge the current technicistic top-down approach, and disseminate a more rounded, humanistic way-of-doing that centers on socio-technical, spatio-temporal complexity;
- kickstart a process of aggregation of perspectives, cases, approaches, and results, and gauge current interest in post-conference dissemination and networking efforts.