



# The Reflection of the Concept of Posthumanism in Graphic Design<sup>1</sup>

## Posthümanizm Kavramının Grafik Tasarımdaki İzdüşümü

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### ABSTRACT

Since the modernist period, the subject in the field of design has largely been positioned as a consumer, and the human-centered design approach has reinforced a consumption-oriented humanist paradigm. However, developments in communication technologies, scientific advancements, and socio-cultural transformations have brought new inquiries regarding the relationship between humans and nature. In this context, the concept of posthumanism has gained prominence. Examining the reflections of this concept in the field of design is important for understanding the changing intellectual and ethical framework of graphic design. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to examine how posthumanist thought is represented within the field of graphic design. The study first conducts a literature review, followed by a qualitative analysis in which three manifestos selected through purposive sampling are examined using reflexive thematic analysis, while graphic design projects are analyzed through visual analysis. The thematic analysis reveals that the anthropocentric paradigm in graphic design discourse is questioned and that design is shifting toward a more inclusive approach encompassing ecological, ethical, and social responsibilities. The visual analysis supports these theoretical findings by demonstrating how the messages conveyed by the designs at the semantic level are reinforced through visual elements such as color, form, and composition. As a result, the study shows that approaches that move beyond the anthropocentric paradigm in graphic design are becoming increasingly visible both in design discourse and in visual production practices. The findings further indicate that a designerly sensibility that conceptualizes the universe as a fluid and interdependent system has been present in graphic design discourse since earlier periods. In this regard, the research contributes to the design literature by presenting a conceptual framework that brings together the historical and contemporary reflections of posthumanist thought within the field of graphic design.

**Keywords:** Human-centered design, Design manifestos, Design philosophy, Sustainability, Graphic design

### Öz

Modernist dönemden itibaren tasarım alanında özne çoğunlukla tüketici olarak konumlandırılmış ve insan merkezli tasarım yaklaşımı tüketim odaklı hümanist paradigmayı güçlendirmiştir. Ancak iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler, bilimsel ilerlemeler ve sosyo-kültürel dönüşümler insan ve doğa ilişkisine yönelik yeni sorgulamaları gündeme getirmiştir. Bu bağlamda posthümanizm kavramı öne çıkmaktadır. Kavramın tasarım alanındaki yansımalarını incelemek, grafik tasarımın değişen düşünsel ve etik çerçevesini anlamak açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışmanın amacı grafik tasarım alanında posthümanizm düşüncesinin nasıl yer aldığını incelemektir. Çalışmada öncelikle literatür incelemesi yapılmış, ardından nitel araştırma kapsamında amaçlı örnekleme ile seçilen üç manifesto; refleksif tematik analiz yöntemiyle, grafik tasarım projeleri ise görsel analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Tematik analiz sonucunda grafik tasarım söyleminde insan merkezli paradigmanın sorgulandığı ve ekolojik, etik ile toplumsal sorumlulukları içeren daha kapsayıcı bir yaklaşıma yöneldiği görülmüştür. Görsel analiz bu kuramsal bulguları destekleyerek tasarımların anlamsal boyutta ilettiği mesajın görsel araçlarla

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(renk, form, kompozisyon vb.) nasıl desteklendiğini pratik çıktılarla netleştirmiştir. Sonuç olarak araştırma, grafik tasarım alanında insan merkezli paradigmanın ötesine geçen yaklaşımların tasarım söylemi ile görsel üretim pratiklerinde giderek daha görünür hale geldiğini göstermektedir. Bulgular, grafik tasarım söyleminde evreni akışkan ve birbirine bağımlı sistemler bütünü olarak ele alan bir tasarımcı duyarlılığının erken dönemlerden itibaren var olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda araştırma, posthümanist düşüncenin grafik tasarım alanındaki tarihsel ve çağdaş yansımalarını birlikte ele alarak tasarım literatüründe sınırlı olan bu ilişkiye dair kavramsal bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Grafik tasarım, İnsan merkezli tasarım, Tasarım felsefesi, Tasarım manifestoları, Sürdürülebilirlik

## INTRODUCTION

Posthumanism includes fundamental questions regarding the physical and intellectual existence of the human. It represents a shift beyond humanism, which emerged in 15th-century Europe. During this period, the invention and development of the printing press accelerated the dissemination of knowledge. This process also entrenched the materialist worldview. The belief that the laws of nature could be explained through scientific inquiry contributed to the emergence of a humanist worldview in which nature could be mastered. Humanism promoted the notion of the self-conscious subject. It positioned the human as universally superior. This attitude paved the way for the categorization of human beings both socially and universally. However, this categorization also confined non-human entities within a fixed and hierarchical framework. It confined human subjectivity itself within this framework as well.

In response to this very framework, the posthumanist approach challenges the foundations of humanist thought. It highlights the limitations of this anthropocentric mode of thinking. Within this context, design practices and visual communication become important sites for questioning anthropocentric perspectives. The graphic designer emerges as a subject who embodies this questioning. Through the visual language they produce, they hold the capacity to construct a non-anthropocentric subjectivity. This capacity becomes particularly visible through urban visual culture. Graphic designers play a key role in shaping this culture. Cities often reflect dualistic structures. This makes them spaces where graphic designers can challenge inequality, exclusionary discourses, and discriminatory imagery. This challenge is not confined to urban space alone; a similar site of questioning emerges in the visual discourse that brands produce in their pursuit of public visibility. According to Wheeler and Meyerson (2024, p. 70), brands increasingly adopt activist discourses addressing social justice, emphasizing inclusivity, diversity, and equality. However, the authors note that such messages only become meaningful when supported by broader societal awareness.

This study establishes a conceptual framework grounded in posthumanist thought. It reconsiders the traditional human-centered paradigm in design literature. The practical reflections of this approach in graphic design are illustrated through selected manifestos and design examples. In doing so, the study addresses the limited exploration of posthumanist thought within graphic design literature.

### 1. Literature Review

The concept of posthumanism has been widely discussed in disciplines outside of design. However, studies addressing the theoretical and practical reflections of this approach in the field of graphic design remain limited. Although the human-centered approach has been dominant in design, technological transformations, ecological crises, and changing paradigms in the contemporary world make it necessary to reconsider this perspective. In this context, relating posthumanist thought to debates in the field of design emerges as an important area of research.

### 1.1. The Foundations of Posthumanist Thought

Posthumanism follows the ideas of humanism and anthropocentrism. The prefix “post” does not imply “opposition” as the prefix ‘anti’ does. Instead, it signifies “continuity”. N. Katherine Hayles, a philosopher and one of the first theorists of posthumanism, states that the word “post” carries a double connotation: “transcending” and “following”. This double connotation suggests that the days of human beings as the central subject may be numbered. Thus, “posthuman” does not actually mean the end of humanity. Rather, the concept points to the end of a certain conception of human beings (Hayles, 1999, p. 283). Pre-World War I humanist thought made definitive claims of human superiority in the universe. With the emergence of posthumanist thought, these claims gave way to uncertainty. In the 21st century, the meaning of being human has moved away from traditional humanism. Re-examining the concept of the human from a contemporary perspective requires a critical approach. This approach questions the meaning and position of the human being in the universe.

The transition from 1968 to the 1970s marked a period of significant historical change, particularly in the Western world. This period was characterized by waves of environmental, feminist, political, and social change. It was during this time that Posthumanism first emerged in postmodern literature. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), the earliest use of the term dates back to the 1970s. The literary critic Ihab Hassan’s writings in 1971 mark its first appearance. The OED defines posthumanism as “the idea that humanity can be transformed, transcended, or eliminated through technological advances or evolutionary process; the artistic, scientific or philosophical practice that reflects this belief”. Posthumanism developed in the 1980s and is generally understood as a critique of the epistemological position of the human subject.

Posthumanism challenges traditional definitions of the human by questioning the dualistic frameworks that structure Western thought. These dichotomies—such as human/machine, human/animal, and nature/culture—position the human as a privileged center. Posthumanist thought seeks to decenter this position. It emphasizes hybrid relations between humans, technology, and other living beings. In this sense, it rejects speciesism and proposes overcoming anthropocentrism (Özdemir, 2021, p. 17). Rosi Braidotti (2014, pp. 12-13) argues that scientific and technological advances have blurred the boundaries between the natural and the cultural. This has complicated the structure of identity shared by our species within contemporary science, politics, and international relations. This situation calls for a rethinking of the human’s place in the universe, the notion of the rational individual, and the relationship between the human and the non-human world. The questioning of human existence has its roots in Western philosophical thought. The ontological speciesism inherent in this conventional perspective accepts the idea that non-human animals should be given different values or rights solely because they belong to a different species than *Homo sapiens* (Marchesini, 2018, p. 17). These thinkers generally oppose the claims of human sovereignty and autonomy that emerged during the Enlightenment. They emphasize the falsity of the constructed idea of humanism. Michel Foucault also questions the epistemological authority of man. According to Foucault (2001), the archaeology of human thought is a recent construct (p. 538). Foucault addresses the notion of “human” as a modern invention. Posthumanism is a concept that draws heavily on these ideas.

Hassan (1987) argues that postmodernism is misguided. It is trapped in its kitsch, between an ideological assault and a nakedness without mystery. According to the author, the realities of change must be accepted – even when one seeks to challenge them. The true challenge for the human is always the process of self-revelation. Human existence, marked by constant change, positions the human as a dynamic being best understood as a process. Ferrando (2019, p. 3) suggests that posthumanism can be considered the philosophy of our time and as a second generation of postmodernism. It constitutes a radical critique of both humanism and anthropocentrism. When considered as “post-humanism”, it signifies a structural referral beyond the boundaries of the human

and the human construct.

One of the key texts examined in this study is the *Posthuman Manifesto*, articulated by academic Pepperell in his 1995 work. The manifesto consists of eight main sections, with the central themes asserting that humans are no longer the most significant beings in the universe, that technological progress drives the transformation of the human species, and that although humans are not born equal, it remains necessary to assume that they are. According to Pepperell, posthumanist thinkers do not fall into the illusion of an ideal society in which everything functions perfectly (Pepperell, 2003, p. 177).

Based on the review, posthumanist thought offers a broader perspective that challenges hegemony by addressing the problems of humanity. This discourse in the social sciences primarily focuses on concepts related to the human being. Positioning in a separate place within the hierarchy created by a dualist structure, the human being has caused many anomalies, such as inequality, discrimination, income injustice, global warming, and environmental destruction. These anomalies have laid the foundation for many of the universal problems encountered in the 21st century.

## 1.2. The Position of Humans in the Field of Design

In a world where everything is designed, design arguably adopts an inherently humanistic structure. According to Tunalı (2020, p. 19), the future world will be anthropocentric, design-based, and humanistic. However, many scholars have highlighted the dangers posed by anthropocentric design, particularly its potential harm to the planet. At this point, posthumanist thinking de-centers the human and foregrounds recycling, sustainability, ethics, justice, and environmental concerns.

Anthropocentric design emerged in the 1970s and became influential in consumer product development in the 1990s. According to Norman (2013, p. 9), it is an approach that prioritizes human needs, abilities, and behaviors, creating solutions to meet these needs effectively. However, approaching design from a human-centered perspective requires methodologies that, by definition, keep the resulting practice anthropocentric. In other words, the anthropocentric way of thinking may not always lead to outcomes that benefit humanity. It can also be employed by companies and states for their own interests. Within the neoliberal order, designers, companies, and states often frame humans primarily as consumers. This framing can lead to the exploitation of both human and planetary resources. In this context, Fry (2009, p. 110) argues that unsustainability is a consequence of design, as the current economic order is the result of an anthropocentric worldview. According to Fry, humans have become increasingly dependent on designed artifacts. From an ontological perspective, design shapes human existence and may also contribute to a growing detachment from nature. Herein, Willis' (2019, p. 17) concept of Ontological Design is also relevant. Willis argues that designed objects eventually redesign humans; there cannot be an undesigned human nature since design already shapes humankind.

In their book on the social responsibility of designers, Heller and Vienne (2018) mention a chapter curated by Laetitia Wolff, which discusses the methodology of Design Thinking. In this chapter, the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) recommends "The Path to Impact" as an alternative to Design Thinking. The latter is a methodology that enables designers to find innovative solutions by placing people and the market at the center. This proposition advocates a conscious act of design, prioritizing social responsibility. More recently, Casiddu, Burlando, and Chen (2024) propose the concept of "Human-de-centred design." This approach explicitly advocates for the subjugation of human interests to the requirements of the ecosystem by withdrawing the human from the center. "Human-centered approach" or "user-oriented design" are terms that are frequently used in discussions about technological and environmental transformation around the world. However, the evolving relationship between human beings, nature, the world, and socio-technical systems has questioned these approaches. As Sanders and Stappers (2008, p. 10) highlight, user-centered design

cannot solve the scale and complexity of today's challenges. Design is no longer just about creating for users; it is now about shaping future experiences of people, communities, and cultures. Industrial designers Papanek and Fuller argued that "If design is ecologically responsive, then it is also revolutionary" (Papanek & Fuller, 1972, p. 241). As economic models continue to promote a culture of consumption, designers inevitably play a role in the destruction of the environment. However, sustainability can be achieved when design respects and responds to nature. According to Papanek and Fuller (1972, p. 241), the welfare of the planet can be improved by supporting a system that prioritizes repair over disposal and seeks balance over growth. The 2016 Istanbul Design Biennial in Turkey was organized under the theme "Are we human? The design of our species: 2 seconds, 2 days, 2 years, 200 years, 200,000 years". In their curatorial text, Colomina and Wigley (2016) explain the relationship of the design perspective with the human, stating "design always seems to be in the service of human beings, but its main claim is to redesign human beings." They argue the focus should not be on achieving 'good design' but on rethinking design itself. They argue that design is always augmentative: it creates new bodies by transforming old ones. The idea of a singular, unchanging human figure that design serves is a fantasy. This figure is not the starting point of design, but only one of its effects. Based on all these ideas, designers from different fields offer different suggestions by drawing attention to the limitations of the human-centered approach.

In the case of graphic design, Armstrong (2012, pp. 13-14) argues that the origins of cultural criticism can be traced back to avant-garde movements. The author cites the Russian Constructivists as an example and mentions their vision of a collective, just, and egalitarian society. In contrast, Armstrong argues that the International Typographic Style in graphic design in the 1950s and 1960s formed the power centers of today by emphasizing its scientific objectivity. The focus on social responsibility resurfaced toward the end of the 1960s, with the New Typography Movement helping achieve this breakthrough. In the 1990s and 2000s, design increasingly embraced a consumer culture-based activist wave. This wave was reflected in Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, and in the signing of the First Things First 2000 Manifesto by thirty-two pioneering designers. The 1964 manifesto by Ken Garland discusses the professional responsibilities of graphic designers and gives a posthumanist rather than humanist perspective (Garland, 1964). Even before the term posthumanism was used in the 1970s, ideas aligned with this perspective were already appearing in graphic design. Jessica Helfand (2001) noted that graphic designers in the 1990s increasingly engaged with environmental concerns, reflecting on the relationship between design practices, global warming, and sustainable ecosystems. Designers experimented with environmentally conscious materials and aesthetic approaches; however, some of these stylistic choices were later viewed with both nostalgia and criticism (p. 97). Throughout the history of design, manifestos have served as important platforms through which designers articulate critical perspectives on the role and responsibilities of design. Within the field of graphic design, the First Things First manifesto (Garland, 1964/2000) questioned the professional responsibilities of designers and criticized consumer-oriented design practices. More recently, the Regenerative Design Manifesto (2024) has proposed an ecological and regenerative approach to design that moves beyond human-centered thinking. As stated in the manifesto, "design needs to do more than serve people; it must heal and renew" (The Regenerative Design Manifesto, 2024). These manifestos reflect different historical moments in which designers have questioned anthropocentric assumptions in design.

Beyond theoretical debates and manifestos, these ideas have also been reflected in contemporary graphic design education. Anastasiia Raina teaches the undergraduate course, Design in the Posthuman Age, which explores the intersection of posthumanism and graphic design. Raina contextualizes the course material historically, drawing upon the research and perspectives of preceding designers and futurists. She notes that "the scope of design has moved beyond the materiality of objects, from the physical realm to biotechnological matter composed of chemical substances and coded genetic information, from physical space to code and data" (Albanese, 2020). Raina also emphasizes that the idea of the human as "the measure of all things," as expressed by Protagoras, lies at the core of traditional design thinking. Reflections of this idea are visible in

Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* and Le Corbusier's *Modulor system* (Andersen, 2019). These references raise new questions regarding the expansion of design beyond an anthropocentric framework toward a posthuman perspective that recognizes the interconnected existence of humans and non-humans. This shift suggests that contemporary graphic design increasingly engages with interdisciplinary knowledge and emerging scientific and technological contexts.

Although these discussions highlight the growing importance of posthumanist perspectives in design, the reflection of these ideas within the field of graphic design has not been sufficiently examined. Therefore, this study examines the place of this thought in graphic design by exploring how these ideas appear in manifestos and how they inform contemporary graphic design practices. The scope of the study is limited to selected manifestos analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis and a number of graphic design examples examined through visual analysis.

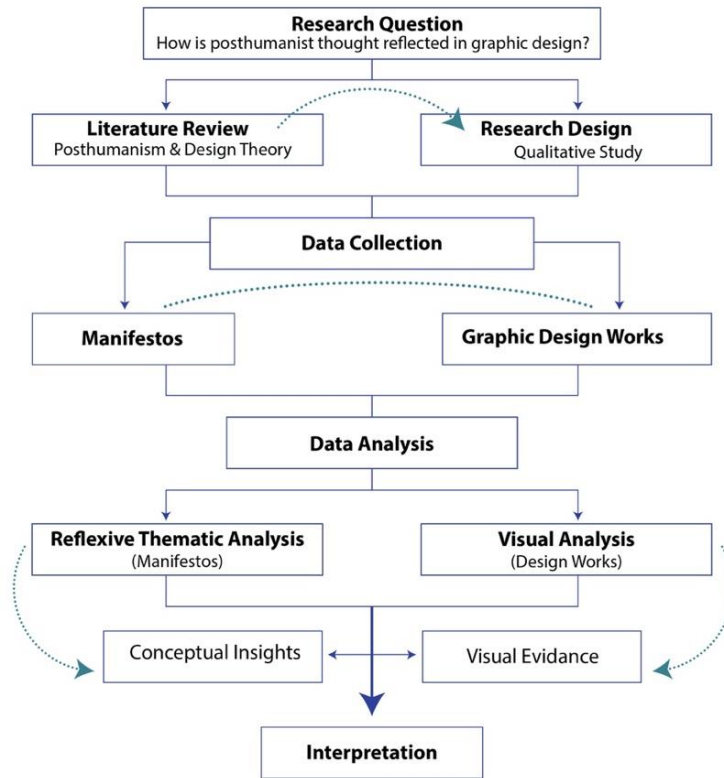
This qualitative research has been conducted based on a literature review and within the framework of the following questions:

- What is the place of posthumanist thought in the field of design?
- How does the human-centered approach emerge in design?
- What needs to change in the understanding of design?
- How can posthumanist thought be addressed in the field of graphic design?

These research questions guided the conceptual and methodological structure of the study. In order to answer them, selected manifestos were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis, while relevant graphic design works were examined through visual analysis. This approach makes it possible to connect theoretical discourse with visual design practices and demonstrates how posthumanist ideas articulated in manifestos can be interpreted within contemporary graphic design practice.

## 2. Methods

This study draws on a comprehensive literature review to explore the conceptual development and key debates surrounding posthumanism. The reflection of the concept on graphic design was analyzed using qualitative research. The study employs two methods: Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and Visual Analysis. In this process, MAXQDA24 was used as a supportive tool for organizing, coding, and visualizing qualitative data. The software facilitated the systematic management of codes and the visualization of thematic relationships. However, the analytical process itself relied on the interpretative engagement of the researcher, in accordance with the principles of Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Therefore, the software did not perform the analysis but supported the transparency and organization of the coding process. The combined application of RTA and visual analysis enriches the study by linking theoretical insights with visual evidence. Posthumanist themes identified through RTA were also observed in the contemporary graphic design works examined, providing empirical grounding and enhancing the robustness of the findings (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Research Design and Analytical Framework of the Study

Three manifestos situated within the context of design and posthumanism were selected for analysis. These texts were subsequently examined using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) in the MAXQDA24 program. The study employed criterion sampling as a purposive sampling strategy. *The Posthuman Manifesto* (1995), *First Things First* (1964/2020) from the field of graphic design, and the *Regenerative Design Manifesto* (2024) published by designers from various fields were chosen for their ability to clarify the posthumanist context. The manifestos were selected based on two overarching considerations: their publication by professionals and their relevance to the research questions. More specifically, the purposive sampling criteria were as follows: (1) presenting a posthumanist approach; (2) belonging to the field of design, art, or philosophy; (3) being comparable and relatable; (4) having been published in different periods; and (5) being accessible.

According to Braun and Clarke (2023, p. 2), RTA emphasizes active theme generation and allows the researcher's subjective perspective. It does not require reliability testing or the presentation of quantitative data, since coding relies on the researcher's interpretive and reflexive role rather than on objective standards. The research questions focused on identifying how texts position the human and on uncovering the foundations of posthumanist thinking in graphic design. Guided by these questions, each manifesto was examined and coded inductively. Codes expressing similar ideas were grouped together, highlighted using the same color, and subsequently organized into four overarching themes. The historical context of each manifesto was considered when interpreting the designers' embedded discourses.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was conducted following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, familiarization with the data was achieved through repeated reading of the manifestos. In the second phase, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments related to posthumanist discourse in design. Third, the coded segments were organized into potential themes reflecting recurring patterns across the texts. In the fourth phase, these themes were reviewed and refined to ensure conceptual coherence and internal consistency. The fifth phase involved defining and naming the themes based on their conceptual focus. Finally, the themes were

interpreted and reported in relation to the research questions and the broader theoretical framework of posthumanism in graphic design.

In the second part of the study, three graphic design works were selected through purposive sampling and analyzed using visual analysis. Visual analysis in graphic design research often draws on theoretical frameworks such as semiotics, communication theory, semantics, and discourse analysis, which enable researchers to interpret how visual elements construct and communicate meaning (Noble & Bestley, 2005, pp. 18-19). Through these approaches, visual artefacts can be examined in relation to their formal structure, encoded meanings, and broader cultural contexts. The selected works consist of award-winning examples from 2024–2025 and were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) thematic relevance, (2) recency, (3) diversity of design outputs, and (4) representation of different national contexts. The selected manifestos and visual materials were obtained from publicly accessible sources and examined in accordance with ethical research principles. The selected works were analyzed from three perspectives: formal, semantic, and socio-cultural. The formal analysis focused on visual elements such as color, form, composition, and typography. The semantic analysis sought to identify the meanings and messages conveyed by the visuals. The socio-cultural analysis examined the inclusive, equitable, and planet-centered dimensions of the designs, as well as the contribution of cultural references embedded in the visuals. This analytical framework was adopted to examine the visual structure, meanings, and socio-cultural implications of the selected works. This multi-perspective approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how the designs embody and communicate posthumanist themes.

### 3. Results

This study investigates the presence of posthumanist thought in graphic design by analyzing selected manifestos through reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and examining graphic design works through visual analysis. This combined methodological approach connects theoretical discourse with visual design practices. The themes identified through reflexive thematic analysis were interpreted in relation to the research questions guiding this study. This interpretation allows the findings to reveal how this perspective appears in design discourse and how the human-centered approach is questioned within the field of graphic design.

### 3.1. Thematic Analysis

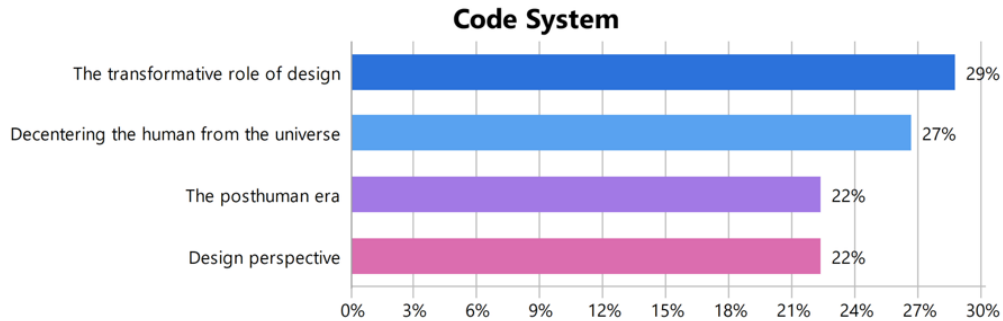
The data from the analyzed manifestos were examined using the MAXQDA24 program. Figure 2 shows the most frequent words in the three manifestos in the sample set.



**Figure 2.** Visualization of the Three Manifestos with Word Clouds

“Human”, “posthuman”, “nature”, and “change” frequently appear in the manifestos in connection

with the term “design.” These prominent terms indicate that discussions about humanity, nature, and transformation occupy a central place in the manifestos. Coding was first conducted on three manifestos, and the resulting codes were organized into four main themes: “the transformative role of design”, “decentering the human from the universe”, “the posthuman era”, and “design perspective.” The comparison of these themes showed that “the transformative role of design” was the most dominant one (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Themes and Top-Level Code Statistics

Based on the code matrix analysis, there was a significant overlap among the common themes. As the Posthuman Manifesto is not a design manifesto, there was almost no commonality in design-related codes. *The Posthuman Manifesto* touched upon topics such as “consciousness”, “human knowledge”, “science”, and “technology”. However, since the study approached graphic design through the posthumanist perspective, only the section related to aesthetics, technology, and the human was coded. The most coded theme was “the posthuman era”. The code “technology and machine” was not encountered in either of the two design manifestos. The manifesto that merged the most diverse themes in terms of subject matter was the *Regenerative Design Manifesto* (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Image from Code Matrix

Based on the analysis of the connections between the themes and sub-themes in Figure 5, the codes “critical thinking in design,” “design education,” and “technology and machines” appeared to be isolated on the peripheries of the map. This was because these themes were rarely encountered in the analyzed manifestos.

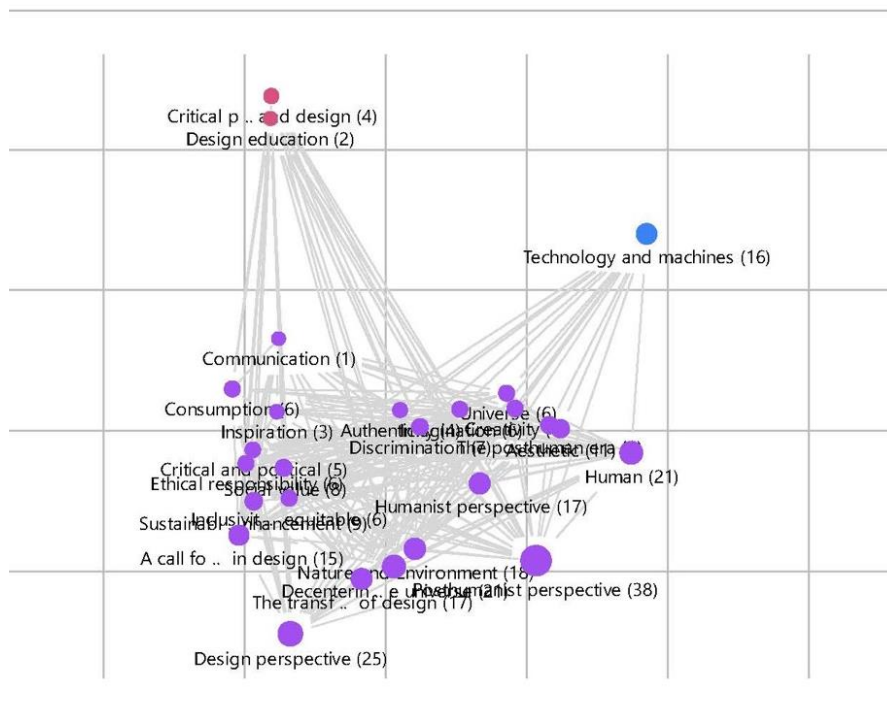


Figure 5. Proximity of Codes in the same Document

### 3.1.1. “The Posthuman Era” Theme

This theme relates to the research question concerning the place of posthumanist thought in design. Previous studies in design theory have highlighted how non-anthropocentric perspectives challenge the traditional human-centered understanding of design (Fry, 2009). Posthumanist theory has also questioned anthropocentric assumptions about the human and its place in the world (Braidotti, 2014). This research theme was comprised of three core codes. The first, “Imagination,” and the second, “Technology and Machines” addressed human capabilities and the resulting outcomes of these abilities. The third code, “Human,” was further divided into two sub-codes (“Humanist Perspective” and “Posthumanist Perspective”) aimed at identifying perspectives regarding the position of humanity in the universe by distinguishing between humanist and posthumanist viewpoints. According to the data, humanism rested on core assumptions about humanity’s role in the universe, suggesting that the world and the cosmos exist primarily for human benefit. However, the very notion of what constitutes the human was critically interrogated within the “posthumanist perspective”. In design manifestos, the humanist attitude was associated with a human-interest and profit-oriented approach, meaning that human desires were prioritized. Ecological and ethical concerns were not on the agenda. At this point, designers criticized their humanist approach (Table 1).

Table 1. Examples from “Humanist Perspective” code

| Coded Segments                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Codes                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| “We, the undersigned, are designers who have been raised in a world in which we put profit over people and the planet in an attempt to grease the wheels of capitalism and keep the machine running. Our time and energy are increasingly | Decentering the human from the universe<br>Consumption |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| used to manufacture demand, to exploit populations, to extract resources, to fill landfills, to pollute the air, to promote colonization, and to propel our planet's sixth mass extinction. We have helped to create comfortable, happy lives for some of our species and allowed harm to others; our designs, at times, serve to exclude, eliminate, and discriminate" (First Things First, 1964/2020). | Discrimination<br>Nature and environment<br>Critical perspective on advertising and design                                                                                 |
| "They suggest a profound shift from human-centered design models to ones inclusive of broader ecological and ethical considerations, essential for addressing the challenges of our current era and fostering more inclusive futures" (The Regenerative Design Manifesto, 2024).                                                                                                                         | The transformative role of design<br>A call for change in design<br>Inclusivity, pluralist, and equitable<br>Decentering the human from the universe<br>Design perspective |
| "The humanist era was characterized by certainty about the operation of the universe and the place of humans within it" (The Posthuman Manifesto, 2003).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Universe                                                                                                                                                                   |

Every manifesto included a discourse on imagination, leading to the creation of the code "imagination". From the posthumanist perspective, however, imagination was not associated with being caught up in dreams. It was accepted that not everything in society could be perfect, and that there were limits to logic. Machines were distinguished from humans because machines exhibited fully logical, predictable behavior, whereas human behavior did not. Graphic designers critically emphasized the role of imagination in creating ephemeral consumer goods. According to them, designers should imagine nature, society, and design together, thinking not only about the present but also about the future. By exploring new forms of interaction, it becomes possible to create systems that extend beyond human-centered thinking.

"Technology and machines" was not a common code seen in the manifestos; it only appeared in the Posthuman Manifesto. According to a humanist point of view, technology is seen as existing for the benefit of human beings. Conversely, from the posthumanist perspective, technology evolves alongside human beings, making the two inseparable. Distinguishing between man and machine is becoming increasingly difficult. Within this conceptual framework, several codes involving art emerged. Elements such as coincidence, discontinuity, and algorithmic processes can be creative, and in this case, not only humans but also machines can create. Therefore, the belief that creativity belongs only to humans no longer holds in the posthumanist era.

### 3.1.2. "Decentering the Human from the Universe" Theme

This theme addresses the research question concerning the emergence of the human-centered approach in design. Design literature has long discussed the dominance of anthropocentric thinking and its implications for sustainability and ethics (Norman, 2013; Papanek & Fuller, 1972). This theme also relates to the research question "How does the human-centered approach emerge in design?", building on the discussion introduced in the previous theme. In a theme consisting of 62 codes, categories addressing the damages caused by the humanist approach were created and divided into the sub-themes of "consumption", "discrimination", "nature and environment", "universe", and "critical perspective on advertising and design". This theme captured the negative consequences of human-centered thinking, which was frequently repeated in manifestos. The notion that human beings are not the world's most significant entities gained prominence. Environmental harm caused by human practices was generally

criticized under “nature and environment”, and the dualism between human and nature was strongly emphasized (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Examples from “Nature and Environment” code

| Coded Segments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Codes                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| We must understand that we are not outside of nature; we are a part of a complex system, and our actions must reflect that knowledge (First Things First, 1964/2020).                                                                                                                               | Posthumanist perspective<br>Design perspective |
| Every element, from an insect to climate forces, has its kind of influence. Humans are co-participants in large networks of actors. We acknowledge the agency of more-than-human entities such as microorganisms, animals, plants, fungi, and landscapes (The Regenerative Design Manifesto, 2024). | Human<br>Posthumanist perspective              |
| First, we had God, humans, and nature. The rationalists dispensed with God, leaving humans in perpetual conflict with nature (The Posthuman Manifesto, 2003).                                                                                                                                       | Human                                          |

Various forms of discrimination were observed in all three manifestos under the code “discrimination”. It was emphasized that design itself can contribute to social inequalities. The design manifestos emphasized the need to accept differences and otherness instead of suppressing them – an approach that aligns with the posthumanist perspective. “Consumption” appeared in the design manifestos, highlighting the significant role of designers, especially graphic designers, in the production of consumer goods. “Universe” emphasized the bigger picture by decentering the human being and foregrounding humanity’s place within a broader cosmic and ecological context, recognizing wider responsibilities. “Critical perspective on advertising and design” reflected graphic designers’ ability to self-criticize, as seen in the manifesto *First Things First*.

### 3.1.3. “Design Perspective” Theme

This theme responds to the research question concerning what needs to change in the understanding of design. Recent design theories increasingly emphasize ecological responsibility, inclusivity, and ethical awareness in design practices. Within the context of the research question “What needs to change in the understanding of design?”, the corresponding response was identified and organized under the theme of “design perspective”. In this regard, the manifestos advocated for designers’ conscious and ethical practices that would go beyond human-centered design. Particular attention was drawn to the designers’ responsibility to the environment. The manifestos also advocated for challenging the political, economic, and social systems that cause this problem. The manifestos emphasized the need to build inclusive narratives that extend beyond human-centered thinking. In the long term, the focus should be on upholding core values, defending pluralism, and rejecting the separation between society and nature. Designs should be made for a more just future, based on the human role within a complex system (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Examples from “Design Perspective” code

| Coded Segments                                                                                                                                      | Codes                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| “We use design to tell stories and create narratives that elevate more-than-human experiences and values” (The Regenerative Design Manifesto, 2024) | The transformative role of design<br>Decentering the human from the universe |

|                                                                                                                                                                       |                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                       | Nature and environment                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                       | The posthuman era                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                       | Posthumanist perspective                |
| “We must understand that we are not outside of nature; we are a part of a complex system and our actions must reflect that knowledge” (First Things First, 1964/2020) | Decentering the human from the universe |
|                                                                                                                                                                       | Nature and environment                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                       | Posthumanist perspective                |

The codes “inspiration,” “design education,” “authenticity,” “aesthetics,” and “creativity” were included under this theme. It was observed that only the Regenerative Design Manifesto advocated a nature-based approach in the Inspiration code. There were no deep discourses on design education. There were only two coded references in the *First Things First Manifesto*, one of which emphasized that the ideals stated should include multidisciplinary design education. Although authenticity was not directly mentioned in the manifestos, it could be explained indirectly through aesthetics. It was mentioned that when design is driven by personal taste, it often leads to imitation, lacking aesthetic authenticity.

#### 3.1.4. “The Transformative Role of Design” Theme

This theme relates to discussions in design literature emphasizing the transformative and socially responsible role of design in addressing ecological and societal challenges (Papanek & Fuller, 1972; Fry, 2009). The theme “the transformative role of design” identifies designers’ recognition of the positive impact their work can have on the world (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Example from “The transformative role of design” theme

| Coded Segments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Codes                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| We recognize design as a powerful force that impacts not only humans’ experiences but the very fabric of life on Earth. As designers, we acknowledge design as a medium for serving something greater than ourselves — the regenerative capacity of living systems, the intricate web of life, and the future of all beings (The Regenerative Design Manifesto, 2024). | Decentering the human from the universe |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Universe                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Posthumanist perspective                |

Notably, the Regenerative Design Manifesto contributed to this theme with its discourse on long-term positive transformation. It was mentioned that designers are sensitive to the world and aware of their role in shaping the future. The manifesto advocated for building a better world – one that prioritizes the common good, mutual respect, and the preservation of traditional learning and values. It also called for inclusion that goes beyond equality alone, alongside a shift from an exploitative mentality.

### 3.2. Results of Visual Analysis

The visual examples analyzed in this section illustrate how the themes identified in the thematic analysis are reflected in contemporary graphic design practices. The research question “How can posthumanist thought be addressed in the field of graphic design?” can be clarified through visual analysis based on the products of graphic design. Graphic designer Inglis (2023, p. 172) discusses the impact of human activities on the world. Inglis identifies two responsibilities of graphic designers that bring nature into focus, framed as two questions: “How can we make our work more sustainable and less damaging?” and “How can our skills raise awareness of climate

change, highlight evidence, and combat disinformation?” From this perspective, designers and employers need to work together.

### 3.2.1. Analysis of the Life-Extending Stickers Project

Design is fundamentally a problem-solving discipline. A graphic designer can also work to reduce the damage done to the world by designing a product for sustainable, conscious consumption. In this socio-cultural context, the simple sticker design created for Makro Colombia by the advertising agencies VML Colombia and Grey Colombia can be presented as an illustrative example (Fig. 6). This design addresses the issue of food waste caused by people rejecting fruits for cosmetic imperfections (VML, n.d.).



Figure 6. Life Extending Stickers, 2025

To raise awareness and mobilize people on this issue, a visual loop was designed using the power of color, encouraging conscious consumption (VML, n.d.). Semantically, the design conveys this message through its visual structure. Formally, information regarding how the organic product can be used within the cycle—such as the color codes and their intended purposes—is presented through a clean and refined typographic layout. The use of biodegradable materials and ecological ink in the sticker makes it a completely harmless graphic design solution, both environmentally and ethically.

### 3.2.2. Analysis of the ‘Recycle Me’ Coca-Cola Project

According to Wheeler and Meyerson (2024, p. 70), the shareholder-oriented business approach that existed in the past has changed. Sustainability has introduced new obligations for brands. As social awareness rises, brand promises that address environmental impact and production processes come to the forefront. In relation to this, authenticity plays a key role. Brands convey this socially conscious message through the work of graphic designers. One such example is the “Recycle Me” advertising campaign (Fig. 7). It was developed by the Ogilvy New York advertising agency for The Coca-Cola Company. Through this campaign, individuals in society are called to take action for recycling (Ogilvy, n.d.).

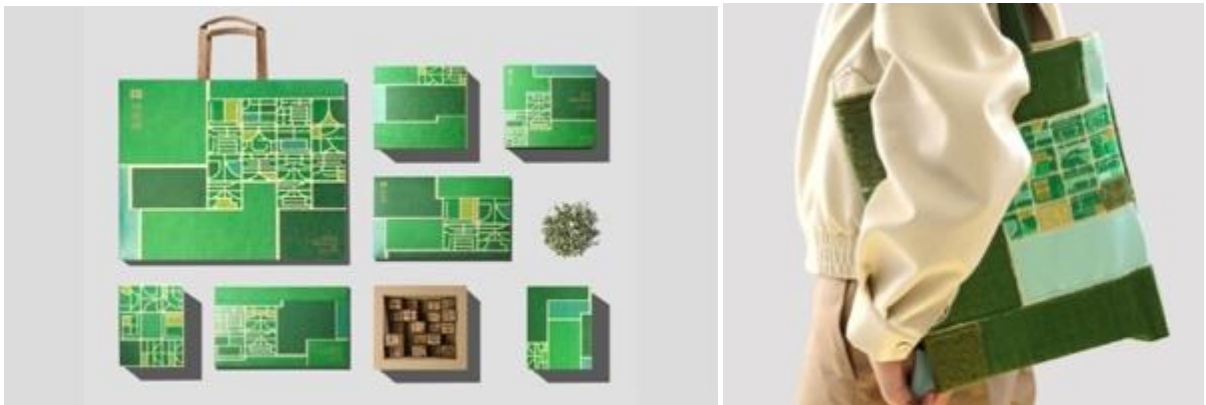


**Figure 7.** Coca-Cola, 'Recycle Me' Campaign, 2025

At the semantic level, the discourse in the poster is simplified, using only the phrase 'Recycle Me.' Formally, the red from the brand's visual identity is used as the background, while the central placement of the white logo presents a minimal approach. With the logo's crushing effect, the action expected from society is visually expressed. Thus, in the collaboration between the brand and the design, discourses emphasizing care for the world have been made visible in the public sphere. This visibility, in turn, enhances the significance of the work at the socio-cultural level.

### 3.2.3. Analysis of the Zhaoping General Mountain Project

Graphic designers can bring nature and people together, drawing inspiration from nature and keeping culture alive through imagery without diminishing their meaning. Thus, at the semantic level, a pluralistic approach is presented, moving beyond conventional aesthetic judgments. The branding of Zhaoping General Mountain serves as an example for this approach (Fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** Zhaoping General Mountain, L3 Branding, 2025

At the socio-cultural level, the branding of Zhaoping General Mountain, a tea brand from the Zhaoping region in China, has been developed around a concept inspired by the tea plantations. The work incorporates embroidery patterns created by elderly members of the local community and features them on the products. This initiative has also contributed to increasing local employment (D&AD, n.d.). Formally, the typography reflects the visual patterns of the plantations, and the color choices have been selected to harmonize with nature. This reflects the geographical character of the region within the cultural dimension of the brand's identity, building a meaningful narrative. Brand consistency is maintained through the adaptable

application of this visual system across different products. In this sense, the visual examples help to clarify how the conceptual themes identified in the manifestos can be interpreted within contemporary graphic design contexts.

#### 4. Discussion

Besides leaving a positive impact on the world, brands aligning their discourse with concrete actions also strengthen communication and loyalty between themselves and consumers (Wheeler & Meyerson, 2024, p. 70). Projects such as Life Extending Stickers are aimed at influencing and changing consumer behaviors. From this perspective, it is worth mentioning two key ideas identified by Els Kuijpers (2017) as foundational to visual production. Kuijpers argues that visual production is shaped by both abstract factors (e.g., thought, ideology, language, and culture) and concrete factors (e.g., economy, production conditions, and technology). Secondly, Kuijpers emphasizes that visual content should be considered in terms of whether it is “affirmative” or “critical” (p. 10). This means that the message should not only be examined on the semantic level, but also on the syntactic and pragmatic levels, particularly in terms of how it interacts with the public within a given space. At this stage, the role of graphic designers becomes particularly important. However, the First Things First manifesto did not address the communication dimension of graphic design. From a posthumanist perspective, the Regenerative Design Manifesto accepts design as a form of communication and emphasizes the importance of constructing narratives that include humans and the “more than human”. This approach is aimed at targeting a wider audience. This can be observed in Coca-Cola’s advertising ‘Recycle Me’ campaign, discussed in the visual analysis. Here, the message expressing concern for the environment is communicated to the recipient, establishing a connection with the consumer.

Posthumanist discourse acknowledges the presence and importance of technology, though it does not place it at the center of its narrative. In the design manifestos examined, technology was not heavily emphasized in either of them. From a humanist perspective, creative actions distinguish humans from machines. However, from the posthumanist perspective, creative action is understood to include the use of technology and machines. According to Tony Fry (2013), the act of design eliminates the duality of human and animal. Based on this view, the act of graphic design involving machines may be seen as an example of overcoming the human/machine duality through the aesthetic outcome of the design process. In terms of design – particularly graphic design – technology can be viewed as a tool. Design tools can change over time (i.e., due to the introduction of computers in design and the use of artificial intelligence), so not placing them at the center of a manifesto’s discourse can be interpreted as preventing the discourse from diminishing in impact over time. For example, a graphic designer may use artificial intelligence to create images for an advertising campaign, delegating a portion of the design process to a machine. Therefore, advancements in information technology have a posthumanist impact on graphic design practice. New technologies, combined with human and non-human perspectives, affect the creative understanding of the resulting product in both science and aesthetics. As new design environments continue to emerge, the importance of design skills becomes even more crucial. According to the AIGA report Designer of 2025 (AIGA, 2017), technology in future-oriented design education should not be viewed merely as a tool, but a data-rich, data-aware landscape that reads and responds to everything humans do. Therefore, production becomes active instead of passive.

Furthermore, regarding design education in the context of the article, FitzGerald (2019, p. 42) argues that students preparing for the service sector are trained on the functional dimension of

design, and that workshops lack critiques of social, cultural, political, and ecological aspects. A similar gap appears in the manifestos examined: the discourse on design education remains insufficient.

The Regenerative Design Manifesto emphasizes drawing inspiration from nature for design, a perspective that can be traced back to William Morris (1834-1896), a figure in the early history of graphic design. These ideals of inspiration can be applied to the field of graphic design when it comes to visual production. However, it is equally important that the field remains fully aware of the infinite aesthetic possibilities brought about by digitalization. Considering the examples discussed in the visual analysis, this approach can be seen in the example of “Zhaoping General Mountain.” Herein, it became possible to draw inspiration from nature while also gaining insight into and embodying a nation’s unique geography and culture. This elevated the work to a distinct level.

The findings are consistent with previous discussions in design literature that question the limitations of human-centered approaches and emphasize the ethical and ecological responsibilities of designers (Fry, 2009; Norman, 2013). Similar concerns have also been raised in graphic design literature that emphasizes the social responsibility of designers and critiques consumer-oriented design practices. For instance, Papanek & Fuller (1972) argued that design should respond to ecological realities and contribute to socially responsible production. Likewise, Armstrong (2012) highlights how critical traditions in graphic design have questioned the relationship between design, capitalism, and consumer culture. The themes identified in this study, particularly “decentering the human from the universe” and “the transformative role of design”, reflect these broader discussions and demonstrate how posthumanist ideas resonate with ongoing debates in design theory. The visual examples examined in this study also support these theoretical discussions. Projects such as Life-Extending Stickers, the Recycle Me campaign, and the Zhaoping General Mountain branding illustrate how graphic design translates ecological awareness and posthumanist perspectives into visual communication strategies. This demonstrates that these ideas are reflected not only in theoretical debates but also in contemporary graphic design practice.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explores the relationship between posthumanist thought and design through the analysis of manifestos and the visual examination of selected design works. The Posthuman Manifesto emphasized the decentering of the human, asserting that people are no longer the center of the universe. The First Things First Manifesto highlighted the theme of “a call for change in design,” which aligns with this perspective of decentering the human. *The Regenerative Design Manifesto* highlighted designers’ responsibilities. Across the manifestos, themes such as “design perspective” and “the transformative role of design” emerged as dominant findings. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed that these themes indicate that the role of the designer extends beyond visual form-making to include environmental and ethical responsibility. Design manifestos, especially those emphasizing the decentering of the human, stood out for shifting their focus from humans to the planet.

Academic and professional debates increasingly question the limitations of the human-centered approach in design. Within this context, this discourse has gradually become visible in the thinking of designers from different cultures and societies. From this perspective, the themes of these manifestos overlap. These manifestos differ in detail, reflecting the specific needs and changes for their respective periods. Certain discourses align with the spirit of their time, emphasizing ecology, sustainability, and the embrace of otherness. The texts evoke

universal meanings across aesthetic, ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. In doing so, they promote a future-oriented design approach aligned with technological advancements. Today, this philosophy has been incorporated into graphic design curricula, and the partnership of scientific approaches and diverse disciplines has become a valuable resource and material for graphic design practice.

In conclusion, graphic design practices informed by this philosophy move beyond strictly human-centered perspectives. The examples discussed in the visual analysis support this interpretation, demonstrating that these ideas are reflected through visual strategies such as inclusive representation, ecological references, and the rejection of anthropocentric perspectives in graphic design. In this context, the findings suggest that designers play an important role in protecting diversity in visual culture and avoiding the reinforcement of social inequalities through design.

Design approaches shaped by posthumanist values tend to promote inclusivity, equality, and social responsibility while minimizing harm through narratives that respect nature and the environment. The analyzed examples illustrate how graphic design can communicate ecological awareness and socially responsible perspectives in public space. In this sense, graphic design functions as a medium capable of conveying social and environmental discourse, providing an effective platform for the dissemination of these ideas.

This study contributes to design research by demonstrating how posthumanist ideas articulated in design manifestos can be interpreted within contemporary graphic design practices. By combining reflexive thematic analysis with visual analysis, the study proposes a methodological framework for examining the relationship between design discourse and design production. Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The data analyzed in this research are limited to selected manifestos and a specific set of graphic design examples. Therefore, the findings do not claim to represent all possible manifestations of posthumanist approaches in graphic design. Future studies may expand the scope by examining different design disciplines, larger datasets, or alternative methodological approaches in order to explore the reflections of posthumanist thought in design practices more comprehensively. Interviews with designers could reveal how posthumanist discourse is reflected in practice from the designer's perspective. Visual examples from disciplines such as architecture or industrial design could be examined comparatively. In addition, the impact of activist discourses in brand communication on viewers and consumers could be measured through surveys or focus group studies.

### ***Compliance with Ethical Standards***

#### ***1. Conflict of Interest***

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest involving themselves or any potential third parties, either prior to or following the publication of this work.

#### ***2. Ethics Committee Approval***

This study does not require ethics committee approval. A signed declaration confirming this has been submitted with the manuscript.

#### ***3. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) Usage Statement***

Generative artificial intelligence was used partially, limited to language editing. All conceptual framing, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions belong to the authors.

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