The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) welcomed practitioners, researchers, and educators to the 52nd annual conference to collaboratively rethink how environmental research and practice may serve as a foundation for change and justice. EDRA52 took place in Detroit, Michigan, UNESCO City of Design.

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Introduction to EDRA52 Detroit Proceedings

>> EDRA52 Proceedings are an essential component of the EDRA52 conference, ensuring the knowledge shared during the 52nd Environmental Design Research Association Annual Meeting is communicated and available to all interested scholars.

At the EDRA52 Conference held online - in “virtual Detroit” - from May 19-23, 2021, more than 700 presenters and attendees represented 32 countries and participated in a variety of concurrent sessions and events. The conference was hosted by the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture and Community Development, and Wayne State University.

The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) is an international, interdisciplinary organization founded in 1968 by design professionals, social scientists, students, educators, and facility managers. EDRA came into being during a period of social awareness and social unrest, but also new horizons and new visions. True to its origins, EDRA continues to believe in an agenda of social responsibility that has grown from a barely perceptible idea to a more fully-formed vision for healthier, more democratic human environments. EDRA’s mission is to provide a collaborative, multidisciplinary community to connect theory, research, teaching, and practice to recognize, create and advocate for environments that are responsive to diverse human needs. EDRA is committed to equity, inclusion, and respect for all persons.

EDRA52 DETROIT JUST ENVIRONMENTS focused on how research, design, and relationships between people and environments contribute to the creation of justice. Current social, health, environmental, and justice challenges call for collaborative and transdisciplinary efforts to pursue intentional questioning of disciplinary borders and sensitive approaches to framing and addressing pressing contemporary problems through research and practice. The conference theme, JUST ENVIRONMENTS, aligned with EDRA’s critical mission of social justice, sustainability, and the improvement of the quality of life for all people. The conference subtheme, Transdisciplinary Border Crossings, focused on intentional questioning of disciplinary borders, inclusiveness, and sensitive collective approaches and speaks to contested issues related to physical borders, urban fragmentation, marginalization, and all types of exclusionary divides.

The program included more than 500 interdisciplinary presentations. In addition, 12 Virtual Mobile Sessions explored grounded work by Detroit groups and communities who are actively creating “just environments.” Paper and Abstract Sessions, Workshops, Symposia, Intensives, Practitioner-Researcher Collaborations, Posters, and Digital Media Shorts were grouped in conference themes: designing just places | creating just societies | building just communities | framing just worlds | accessing just technologies | supporting just movements | sharing just resources.

These proceedings include: Keynote and Plenary sessions overview, EDRA main events overview, full papers, individual abstracts, group presentation abstracts, and visual presentation abstracts. I hope this publication will be useful in disseminating the knowledge shared and built at the conference.

Thank you to all those who joined us at EDRA52 DETROIT. Together we can seek new ways to understand and build justice for all!

Claudia Bernasconi

EDRA52 Conference Chair, Editor in Chief, Proceedings of the 52nd Conference of the Environmental Design Research Association, 2021
Thank you to our Organizational Members, as well as our Placemaker and Wayfinder Members, who helped make our work possible.

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