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**ENVISIONING THE TRANSITION
FROM INNOVATION TO SUSTAINABILITY**
A fieldtrip with the students
of the University of Basel, June 17, 2022

ABSTRACT:

Design and function as defined by the Horseshoe Theory could guide our analysis of objects that illustrate the future resilience and adaptability of humanity. Items displayed by Design Miami/ at the “The Golden Age” exhibition of Art Basel (June 2022) envision the contrarian, rather than consensual, terms of a nascent transition from innovation to sustainability (TIS).

CREDITS:

Code A Program, Arizona State University — Design Miami/ Basel, Art Basel 2022 — Environmental Humanities Switzerland, Swiss Academic Society for Environmental Research and Ecology — Impuls Program, University of Basel — Social Transitions Research, University of Basel

OBJECTIVE:

Broadly speaking, we examine modern design in domestic furniture as a practical support for the construction of a future TIS “Discourse on the Other.” Positive case studies based on heterology change (Foucault) in the practice of daily life (de Certeau) have until now remained understudied in sustainability studies.

Specifically, we investigate an application of the Horseshoe Theory as a prime conflation example, as the driver of positive case studies, as an agent in shaping the future transition from innovation to sustainability, and as an emerging sub-field in sustainability studies.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Our work on the Horseshoe Theory applied to design and home furniture could be an important contribution to the field of innovation and transition in sustainability studies. Political scientists have debated the Horseshoe Theory without seeing its relevance to sustainability studies. Independently from this debate, leading sociologists have recently established a link between daily life, farmers’ markets, neighborhood revitalization, and sustainable communities. Conflation in Horseshoe Theory may help us bridge gaps in interdisciplinarity, conceptualization, and collaborative work with non-academic actors like UNESCO BRIDGES. We could then better connect ethnographic-style immersive research to ground-breaking theorizing on decision theaters

DATA:

We have examined the pieces of furniture that Design Miami/ exhibited in June 2022. The intensity of their lack of character and their rich references to the golden age of the Euro-American middle class in the 1950s and 1960s “celebrate the resilience and adaptability of humanity” according to Design Miami/. Could their design encapsulate instead the resistance to change and disruptions? We are finding with the horseshoe design of the Morentz Gallery evidence on the transformative significance of a non-horseshoe environment. The later is delineated by vertical straight lines that lead to scalar changes. They stand in contrast to the self-contained U-shaped universe symbolized by armchairs. Horseshoe and non-horseshoe may define a space without communicating to each other.

FINDINGS:

Our work on Horseshoe Theory shows that reporting and documenting positive changes in our *meublé* daily environment lie at the core of a comprehensive sustainability policy that engages ourselves and our neighborhoods.

The results of our matrix may change the way we view the agency of fringe elements in guiding the transition from innovation to sustainability at the intersection of regressive modernity and oppressive traditionalism — both being highlighted by Design Miami/ “The Golden Age.”