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Design From the Margins | Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

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In an age of virtual connectivity and increased reliance on the internet for daily functions, including by marginalized groups, can companies and technologists reframe their features or standards to support the most marginalized users' needs? Can the modes of resilience within digital spaces from some of the most marginalized groups be listened to, learned from, and centered when creating technology? Design From the Margins (DFM), a design process that centers the most impacted and marginalized users from ideation to production, pushes the notion that not only is this something that can and must be done, but also that it is highly beneficial for all users and companies. For this to happen, consumer interest conversations need to be framed outside the "biggest use case" scenarios and United States and European Union-centrisms and refocused on the cases often left in the margins: the decentered cases.

This report outlines how the DFM method can be used to build our most well-known and relied-upon technologies for decentered cases (often deemed "edge cases" which is atypical or less common use case for a product) from the beginning of the design process, rather than retrofitting them post-deployment to cater to communities with what are perceived to be extra needs.

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