

María Fernanda Ramírez Cifuentes

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Education

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

PhD. Interdisciplinary Design and Media
Research Area: Transition Design, Participatory Design,
Civic Design, Critical Futures

Boston, USA
Expected 2027

POLITECNICO DI MILANO

MSc. Digital and Interaction Design
Merit Based Academic Scholarship
Relevant Coursework: Envisioning AI through Design

Milan, Italy
2022

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

BA. Interactivity and Multimedia
Magna Cum Laude
Best Graduation Project

Quito, Ecuador
2019

Research Experience

CENTER FOR DESIGN - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Research Assistant

Boston, USA
01/2024 – Present

- Consultant in the design, strategy and implementation of participatory budgeting workshops for the City of Boston's Office of Participatory Budgeting.
- Activities include: developing a comprehensive toolkit to guide residents and facilitators through the idea collection and proposal development phase.

• **Tools Used:** Figma, Miro, AI, InDesign

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Arnold Mages

DATA THEATRE LAB - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Research Assistant

Boston, USA
02/2025 - Present

- Deliberation Designer for the Green Space and Gentrification in Boston's Neighborhoods project funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Dani-Snyder Young & Dr. Michael Arnold Mages

CRITICAL FUTURES LAB - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Research Assistant

Boston, USA
06/2024 – Present

- Working on Critical Design Pedagogy and STS

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Laura Forlano

HEALTH AND WELLNESS DESIGN LAB - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Boston, USA

Graduate Research Assistant

06/2024 – 06/2025

- Student Design Lead working on innovative models of rural, community-based care in partnership with a nonprofit clinic in Knox County, Maine.
- Activities include: proposing a framework and guidance for the environmental and service design for facilities and mobile healthcare units, communication strategies and organizational and funding models.
- **Tools Used:** Figma, Miro, AI, InDesign
- **Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Michael Arnold Mages

REALITY DESIGN STUDIO LAB - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Boston, USA

Graduate Research Assistant

09/2023 – 12/2023

- Investigated the impact of mismatched haptic and visual feedback on user experience in virtual reality environments.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wallace Lages

Teaching Experience

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION - NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Boston, USA

Instructor of Record. Public Speaking

09/2025 - Present

Publications

Papers

Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F., Villamizar, M., Ciliotta Chehade, E., Arnold Mages, M. Using AI to Support the Design of Participatory Budgeting in Boston. 2026 Design [Re]Thinking

Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F., Arnold Mages, M. Toward Sustainable Transitions: A Design Ethnographic Study of Volcanic Risk Perception in Ecuador. 2025 International Association of Societies of Design Research

Arnold Mages, M., **Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F.**, Yu, C., Glanz, B., & Zurawski, J.
A Systemic Approach to Dyadic Support in Multiple Sclerosis Management. 2025 Relating Systems Thinking and Design

Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F., Ciliotta Chehade, E., Arnold Mages, M., Jain, A., & C-Dina, A.
Co-Creating Participatory Budgeting Systems: A Multi-Stakeholder Conversation. 2024 Relating Systems Thinking and Design

Book Chapters

Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F., Ciliotta Chehade, E., Arnold Mages, & C-Dina, A.
Global Perspectives on Participatory Design and Governance: Latin America's Participatory Budgeting in Action. 2025 Rethinking Engagement through Technology and Design: New Approaches for Participation

Workshops

C-Dina, A., **Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F.**, Ciliotta Chehade, E., & Arnold Mages, M.,
Making Room for Joy: Decolonizing Participatory Design Through Shared Practice and Performance. 2025 Relating Systems Thinking and Design.

Presentations

Ramirez Cifuentes, M. F. Rethinking Risk: Integrating Local Knowledge for Equitable Responses to Volcanic Eruption. 2024 NEST

Industry Experience

NTT DATA - TANGITY

Milan, Italy

UX and Service Designer

06/2022 – 08/2023

- Consultant for a renewable energy corporation. Involved in the research and design process of the application to be used on field.
- Participated in interviews with the stakeholders and took part in the analysis of the results obtained.
- Translated the results into wireframes. Main conceptualisation.

***Tools Used:** Figma, Miro, Mural.*

NTT DATA - EVERIS

Barcelona, Spain

UX and Interaction Designer

02/2022 – 06/2022

- Consultant for an Aerospace Company. Involved in the research and design process of the Cloud Platform.
- Worked with stakeholders to define the requirements and develop the solution.

- Participated in interviews and co-creation workshops with the main users and took part in the analysis of the results obtained.
- Translated the results into wireframes, mockups, and fully functional prototypes using the existing design system.
- Provided support to the team by bridging the developers' requirements and the design proposal in terms of feasibility.

Tools Used: *Figma, Sketch, Miro, Mural.*

ASTRALINTU SPACE TECHNOLOGIES

Quito, Ecuador

Design Lead

03/2021 – 05/2024

- Team lead in the design of a deployment service to transport satellites to space and release them into orbital slots.
- Framing of the design project goals and timelines.
- Facilitator of participatory design sessions.

Tools Used: *Figma, Miro, Mural.*

GRUPO EL COMERCIO

Quito, Ecuador

Digital Product Designer

06/2019 – 03/2022

- Redesigned company's subscriber's site and mobile app.
- Redesigned the company's radio homepage;
- Coordinated the web development team, both for the editorial and the marketing side of the company.
- Design and development of landing pages to help journalists tell stories.

Tools Used: *Figma, Miro, Html, Javascript, Gatsby.*

ITZAM DEV

Quito, Ecuador

Interaction Designer

11/2019 – 12/2020

- Led the design of an insurance company's help request app, starting from the research, conceptualisation, wireframes, testing, and final release of the app.
- Led the design of a platform to manage a car's selling company, customer relations, and employees.

Tools Used: *Figma, AdobeXD, Miro.*

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

Quito, Ecuador

Augmented Reality Designer

04/2019 – 07/2019

- Scenes design for the Augmented Reality Application: Weather Travelers.

Tools Used: *Unity (C#), Maya.*

Methods: Contextual inquiry, ethnography, interviews, focus groups, surveys, journey mapping, systems mapping, problem framing, participatory design, prototyping, usability testing, thematic analysis, data visualization, workshops.

Technical Skills:

Design and Prototyping tools, including Figma, Sketch, AdobeXD, and Unity (AR/VR).

Programming languages for Front End Development including JavaScript, HTML, React, Gatsby, Node.js, MongoDB, as well as C# for Unity and C++.

Languages:

Spanish Native, English C1, Italian B2, French B1.