



President's Message

The Many How Might We Questions of Design

The past few weeks have represented a time of writing intensity for me. Naming driving issues affecting design education as well as research and practice represent a recurrent theme that I am invited to reflect on.

As we confront our VUCA world's dynamic context - the acronym as we know that refers to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the 21st century, there are so many opportunities and challenges our disciplines can inform.

For a recent essay, I decided to list several "How might we questions" (HMQs) that come up for me in conversation with peers, collaborators, and students. The format of HMQs is always energizing to open up frames of inquiry. Below are a few that I have encountered recently.

How might we imagine planning for and developing human cities? How might our organizations be run in a disrupted work environment? How might our products be conceived to respond to a circular economy ethos? How might human-centered services be shaped to be governed by universal design principles that will cater to an increasingly aging population worldwide? How will value be created and defined by and through design? Algorithmic systems are increasingly integrated into the physical and digital infrastructures of our lives. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) impact how we work, heal, socialize, consume and play. How might we leverage these technologies' immense benefits and make visible the minefield of ethical considerations they are also unleashing? Global centers of gravity are shifting. The "romance" of design education with neutrality and the associated myth of the designer's neutral stance is falling apart. How might we teach students the importance of paying attention to the "directional flows" of knowledge production, particularly in community-based initiatives and in the field of social innovation? How might we move the needle in acknowledging the structural inequities and profound biases that remain so prevalent in many of our privileged practices? How might we celebrate the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration beyond borders? As we emerge from the pandemic, how might we contribute to the reinvigoration and renewed importance of international education?

These are questions many of you are addressing, researching, iterating on, and prototyping in your institutions, programs, and courses. They also surface in many of our Cumulus Working Groups and animate our discussions in the Secretariat and with the Cumulus Board. As we start gathering a lot of momentum in anticipation of meeting together for the CumulusRoma Design Culture (s) Conference on **June 8-11**, I am confident that we will encounter important provocations and answers to some of these HMQs in the papers and poster presentations that await us. So much to look forward to and celebrate in June!

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