



President's Message

The Ultimate Design Brief

Earlier this month, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) convened by the United Nations released a major [new report](#) about climate change's devastating "widespread, rapid and intensifying" impacts. Ahead of the upcoming [Climate Change Conference \(COP26\)](#) in Glasgow, this sobering report represents a renewed wake-up call for our design education and research community to take bold action.

Let's make no qualms about it; the verdict is out: in the age of the Anthropocene, we humans have been the most powerful—and destructive—influence on global ecology. We are responsible for the "great acceleration" we have witnessed since the mid-twentieth century in which our energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and rate of growth have thrust our planet into the beyond repair state we find ourselves in. We have now crossed a perilous threshold where every climate future scenario modeled by scientists has us living in a warming world that even our most resolute collective actions have an increasingly slim chance to alter for the better.

While the future isn't perfectly knowable and never has been, the responsibility we have as a global community of artists and design educators to come to grips with the urgency to mitigate some of the catastrophic consequences of climate change ahead has never been greater. We know the shifts that are needed, and we can activate them: embrace a circular economy in the products we create, design and build to net-zero carbon standards, integrate new clean technologies that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels in the urban and transportation systems we design, translate the science into advocacy and memorable communication that will turn heads, change minds and lead to policy change, and more.

Our choice is now between in-action or bold participation. The data is clear and the scenarios sufficiently alarming: we have just been handed the ultimate design brief. Closing to urge us all in the Cumulus community to take the participation route.

My best wishes for a safe "rentrée" in the Global North for those returning to campus and a new academic year that undoubtedly continues to feel different with the ongoing pandemic transitions and uncertainties. To our Cumulus members in the Global South may you have a productive and healthy semester to conclude the year!

Mariana

Mariana Amatullo, PhD

President, Cumulus

Associate Professor, Strategic Design and Management, Parsons

Vice Provost for Global Executive Education and Online Strategic Initiatives,

The New School

