

Working Group 2016

Dear Colleagues,

please feel free to join next ReVeDA Working Group to be held at the 2016 Cumulus Conference in Nottingham. This is going to be the third meeting and the aim is to draw a global map on research in design and the arts, while drawing its fields of interest, the outcomes of the activities, the approaches, the tools and the methodologies, but also its actors (such as the institutions, the industry and the society at large) and the complex networks emerging among them.

For the next ReVeDA WG in Nottingham, we would like to propose a reflection on the nature of design research today, while digging on the relationship between **research as an 'activity' and design as a 'mindset'** and all the possible forms and patterns this connection may posit. We want to explore design research aimed both at improving processes of design but also as a field that is developing domain- specific knowledge that is informed by a variety of theoretical lenses, disciplines, and practices.

As we know, typically, research is categorized according to:

- the level of knowledge, as based r. and applied r.;
- the aims, as exploratory r., as descriptive r., correlation r., explanatory r.;
- the nature of the information, as quantitative r. and qualitative r.

We are inheriting a concept of knowledge from the past century which was divided into indifferent paradigms championing a positivist, scientific approach versus a humanistic/artistic one, so developing conflicting philosophies and ways to look at reality, and as a consequence, specific tools and approaches to research.

In this context, design research as a relatively 'young' discipline can be seen as a hybrid or as a 'bridge' between these seemingly dichotomous schools of thought. As a matter of fact, design has always moved with a renovated freedom to match and blur different positions, approaches, tools and methods of research.

Several studies, in the last decades have attempted to define what constitutes the canon(s) of design research, how its inner workings unfold and what new taxonomies of design research arise (Archer; Cross; Manzini; Friedman, etc.). In some discussions, design research tips closer to the scientific side, other times to the humanistic side, or if it is a form of applied research or base research, or even if it is leading to a new taxonomy. With a broader recognition of the value of design across many sectors and disciplines this is a conversation that is dynamic, pluralistic and continues to stimulate.

Taking these theoretical lenses as background it seems important to ask within our design community: what kind of research are we carrying out? How are we approaching research? What are the outcomes we can point to? What are the paradigms we embrace and carry out?

According to the prime aim of ReVeDA WG, which is to develop an open space of debate about the research experiences of the Cumulus Community, we are inviting to share research experiences and personal visions on the following three different 'kinds' of relationships that may occur in a design

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research process and between the act of designing and researching:

- 1) Research **for** Design, that produces better conceptual and operational tools and methods for designing;
- 2) Research **on** Design, that helps capture the nature of Design as domain-specific knowledge;
- 3) Research **through** Design, that produces visions and proposals adopting original methods, and tools stemming from a designerly way of knowing and design culture.

Please, join us in this session to share research examples and your perspective!

We are honoured to open our session with an intervention by Cumulus special guests, Professors Michael R. Gibson and Keith Owens, from The Design Research Center (DRC) of the University of North Texas College of Visual Arts and Design (<http://designresearchcenter.unt.edu/>). Professor Gibson is a member of the steering committee of the AIGA Design Educator's Community (DEC) and the producer of its new journal *Dialectic*. Professor Owens has served as Managing Director of DRC since 2010. More about their background here: <http://designresearchcenter.unt.edu/people>.