

## **The Kyoto Design Declaration: Building a Sustainable Future**

Introduction by Yrjö Sotamaa

The time of the birth of Cumulus was marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, a great euphoria of freedom and the birth of a “New Europe.” Cumulus was born to promote the ideals of democracy, equality, and freedom of movement. The Cumulus Association has grown in eighteen years to become the most important international organization of universities and colleges of art, design, and media, representing 140 first-class institutions from all continents.

The history of Cumulus and its various activities tells of a strong mission to make societies and industry aware of the importance of culture, art, and design in building sustainable societies, creative economies, innovative regions and a better everyday life for all people. Cumulus has built a powerful global network of dynamic institutions to develop and promote the talent and creativity of young people.

### **New Values and New Ways of Thinking**

A landmark for Cumulus was the signing of the Kyoto Design Declaration on March 28, 2008, in the same venue where the Kyoto Climate Treaty was signed. Through this Design Declaration the members of Cumulus, representing the global community of design educators and researchers, made a commitment to share a global responsibility for building sustainable, human-centered, creative societies.

**The Declaration proposes new values and new ways of thinking.** It stresses, that all people now live in global and interdependent systems for living. We continue to enhance the quality of our lives by creating environments, products, and services utilizing design. Design is a means to create social, cultural, industrial, and economic values by merging humanities, science, technology, and the arts. It is a human-centered process of innovation that contributes to our development by proposing new values, new ways of thinking, of living, and adapting to change.

### **The Declaration is a manifesto of the beginning of a new era.**

A paradigm shift from technology-driven development to human-centered development is underway. The focus is shifting from materialistic and visible values to those, which are mental, intellectual and, possibly, less material. An era of “cultural productivity” has commenced, and the importance attributed to modes

of life, values, and symbols may be greater than that attributed to physical products. Design thinking stands steadfastly at the center of this continuum. Simultaneously, this development also highlights the importance of cultural traditions and the need to extend and revitalize them. Human-centered design thinking, when rooted in universal and sustainable principles, has the power to fundamentally improve our world. It can deliver economic, ecological, social, and cultural benefits to our society and to all people, improve our quality of life, and create optimism about the future and individual and shared happiness.

#### **Designers have to assume new roles.**

Global development, and an awareness of the growth of related ecological and social problems, pose new demands and offer new opportunities for design, design education, and design research. The Declaration challenges design to redefine itself. Designers must assume new roles and commit themselves to developing solutions that lead to a sustainable future.

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To forward the ideals of sustainable development, the members of Cumulus have agreed to seek collaboration with educational and cultural institutions, companies, governments and government agencies, design and other professional associations, and NGOs to promote the ideals of, and share their knowledge about, sustainable development. So far, four major international organizations—ICSID, BEDA, AIGA and EIDD—have given their support to the Declaration.

## **Kyoto Design Declaration 2008**

A statement of commitment by the members of Cumulus to sharing the global responsibility for building sustainable, human-centered, creative societies.

#### **Proposing New Values And New Ways of Thinking**

All the people of the world now live in global and interdependent systems for living. We continue to enhance the quality of our lives by creating environments, products and services utilizing design. Design is a means of creating social, cultural, industrial and economic values by merging humanities, science, technology and the arts. It is a human-centered process of innovation that contributes to our development by proposing new values, new ways of thinking, of living and adapting to change.

#### **An Era of Human Centered Development**

A paradigm shift from technology driven development to human centered development is underway.

The focus is shifting from materialistic and visible values to those which are mental, intellectual and possibly, less material. An era of “cultural productivity” has commenced where the importance attributed to modes of life, values and symbols may be greater than that attributed to physical products. Design thinking stands steadfastly at the centre of this continuum. Simultaneously, this development highlights the importance of cultural traditions and the need to extend and revitalize them.

### **The Imperative for Designers to Assume New Roles**

Global development and an awareness of the growth of related ecological and social problems are posing new demands and offering new opportunities for design, design education and design research. Design is challenged to redefine itself and designers must assume new roles and commit themselves to developing solutions leading to a sustainable future.

### **Seeking Collaboration in Forwarding the Ideals of Sustainable Development**

The members of Cumulus, representing a global community of design educators and researchers, undertake the initiative outlined in this "THE KYOTO DESIGN DECLARATION," to commit themselves to the ideals of sustainable development. Furthermore, the members of Cumulus, have agreed to seek collaboration with educational and cultural institutions, companies, governments and government agencies, design and other professional associations and NGOs to promote the ideals of, and share their knowledge about sustainable development.

### **From Education to Global Responsibility**

In order to fulfil its declared mission to contribute to sustainable social, environmental, cultural and economic development for current and future generations, and to contribute to an environment and culture that makes harmonious and healthy life possible, the Cumulus members make this declaration. Members will commit themselves to accepting their part in the further education of our youth within a value system where each of us recognizes our global responsibility to build sustainable, human-centered, creative societies.

### **The Power to Make Fundamental Improvements to Our World**

Human-centered design thinking, when rooted in universal and sustainable principles, has the power to fundamentally improve our world. It can deliver economic, ecological, social and cultural benefits to all people, improve our quality of life and create optimism about the future and individual and shared happiness.