

Resisting, Recovering, Reflecting, and Reimagining Design Education

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Resisting, Recovering, Reflecting, and Reimagining Design Education

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Editorial: Resisting, recovering, reflecting and reimagining design education

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Abstract: New, ongoing, and unremitting urgencies are aggregating at a furious rate—climate, inequality, populism, poverty, artificial intelligence, and unchecked capitalism. This uncertainty is daunting, but as bell hooks reminded us, “[t]he classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility” (1994: 207). This track explores design education and its limitations and possibilities as a double reading of the central conference themes of resistance, recovery, reflection, and reimagining.

Keywords: Education; Indigenous; Pedagogy

1. Introduction

We invited speculations, positions, possibilities, case studies, and empirical investigations that reconsider our knowledge, methods, and approaches in design education at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels in the following ways:

- **Resisting Education / The Education of Resistance** What forms of design education should be resisted? How has design education been complicit in supporting existing orders? / What does it mean to educate future designers and design researchers for resistance, and what kinds of resistance should we be educating for?
- **Recovering Education / The Education of Recovery** What should we recover design education from? And what might we need to lose? / What does educating future designers and design researchers for recovery mean?
- **Reflecting on Education / The Education of Reflection** Which established epistemologies of design education should we critically reflect on? What modes of



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reflection are needed nowadays? / How can the education of future designers and design researchers utilize reflection to challenge existing orders and worldviews?

- **Reimagining Education / The Education of Re-imagination** How do we reimagine? With whom and what are the fruits of this re-imagining? / What does educating future designers and design researchers for re-imagination mean?

1.1 Resisting Education / The Education of Resistance

Three papers explore decolonial / anti-colonial design education in Australia and Latin America. In a landscape where Indigenous knowledge remains underrepresented in design education, St. John and her co-authors delve into the developmental stages of a project to support Indigenous students in creative programs within Australian universities. This initiative integrates Indigenous knowledge into design education, proposing a comprehensive model informed by literature review, institutional understanding, Indigenous-led agency, and practical application, thus bridging the research-to-practice gap. Meanwhile, Sosa broadens the discourse by exploring decolonization and shifting perspectives in design education, offering a politically informed view on design's role in diverse contexts. With a focus on peripheral regions, the study presents a promising model for localized, decolonial curriculum design, drawing attention to translating the literature review into a tangible, theory-informed framework. Similarly, Marques and Abdala contribute to the conversation by documenting the implementation of a decolonial design course, reflecting the growing scholarly focus on addressing coloniality in design practice.

The other three papers resist traditional design education in other ways. Ghosh and Coppola address ableism in design education, advocating for inclusivity through a pedagogy of care. Transitioning to the practical realm, Nielsen and Vink investigate the omission of messy realities in design methods, emphasizing the importance of fostering critical aesthetic reflexivity among designers. Finally, Griffin and Hull offer a personal narrative of integrating intersectional identities into professional activities, shedding light on the journey of finding joy within complexity, thus enriching the discourse on inclusive design practices.

Writing and sharing diverse and decolonial design practices is a significant act of resistance for the design educator seeking to challenge the status quo in design education. Together, these papers underscore the multifaceted nature of contemporary design education and advocate for its continuous evolution towards inclusivity, decolonization, and critical reflexivity.

1.2 Recovering Education / The Education of Recovery

Six papers explore the idea of recovery and ask what design education might need to recover from or even what role recovery might play in the process of design itself.

Three papers situated or grounded recovery in some way. Baha, Tomás and Philippe considered recovery from traditional models of expertise, where only limited or singular points of authority are considered to 'have' expertise, ignoring the richness offered across

plural expertise profiles. Kessler and Rieger as well as Günay and Süner-Pla-Cerdà consider recovery from a technical or methods perspective, shifting the focus of design education from the purely transactional, operational, or instrumental to one that involves change through agency or that has a value-led.

Three papers actively consider recovery as a part of the design process: Liow reminds us that failure in design is important but that, just as necessary, is how we learn to recover from failure as part of the learning process. Noera, Simeone and Neuhoﬀ delve deeper into the emotional and affective states designers necessarily adopt in their work, observing that inner states, such as hope, are critical components of being a designer. Finally, Yazici and Dogan explore metacognitive awareness and the importance of developing this in an educational setting to support more effective learning, as well as the impact it can have in a practice setting.

1.3 Reflection and Reimagining

Three papers focus on reflection in design education. Meng Dong and Fan make an important distinction between teaching reflection and reflective teaching. They offer a practical and dialogical approach for design educators by expanding on Schön's (1983) established theory and incorporating Brubacher et al.'s (1994) three-step reflection mode. Mejía reflects on the Strategic Design Futures approach within a postgraduate short course to teach students to create intentional behaviour change through design. The course leverages experience and service design methodologies to help students achieve this learning objective. Adikesavan's research reflects on how smaller blended practices foster greater inclusion for students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles. Their blended studio seeks to recover work-life balance and well-being for students and educators, making critique sessions more reflective and interactive.

We received a high volume of submissions on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and design education, perhaps reflecting that GenAI is a topic that asks us all to reimagine design education and do this very quickly. We selected three papers that offered a micro, meso and macro perspective on reimagining design education. Botta, Autuori, Terenghi and Subet present a framework (and online resource) that aligns GenAI tools with different stages of the design process. This is a good jumping-off point for guided exploration of emerging AI tools. It can be read in parallel with the case study of Culen, Karahasanovic, Makokha, Stevens and Zhao on the use of ChatGPT in a Transition Design course. The paper systematically explores students' evolving relationships with GenAI from tool to (almost) collaborator. They report how GenAI may be more effective in some parts of the design process (teamwork, contextual research and how to approach transition design) but less successful in the ideation stage. Whitham, Jacobs, Coulton, Stockton and Lindley are less neutral towards the existential challenges of GenAI and focus on its potential to disrupt twelve areas of design education. They present an ongoing school-wide response to these

disruptions and speculate how future pedagogic design projects can be structured to best support student learning augmented by GenAI.

2. Conclusion

A perennial challenge for the education track is to be inclusive yet offer a generative and critical framing that enables focused and progressive conversations about design education. The main conference theme offered four words: Resistance, Recovery, Reflection, and Reimagination, and it can be easy to see these as simply a nice set of themes that all begin with the letter R. This is a reminder that fitting personal scholarship to opportunities to publish, such as a conference theme, can be a challenge. But it can also be a huge opportunity. What excited us as track Chairs was when new ideas emerged due to authors trying to make things fit and, usually, from new writing.

The idea of **Recovery**, for example, might have far more value beyond only a conference theme. Recovery, as a functional part of the design process or an affective process within a designer, emerged from this track as a concept that could be a focus for future research and scholarship. This type of emerging or new idea makes conferences still relevant and interesting, particularly in design education research. **Resistance** was another of the conference themes reminding us that, sometimes, our own existence can be an act of resistance. The papers of the track demonstrated that even writing about our work as design educators, sometimes at very traditional universities, where other forms of pedagogical practice may seem more valued, is resistance. **Reflection** is a recurring theme in Design Education papers. While Schon's Reflective practice is a fundamental building block of design education, we must also move on from Schon as a sole doctrine. The new technological trends and the tail-end impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have created much space for **Reimagining**, the fourth R-word of the conference.

While conferences naturally serve as platforms for presenting our research, leading to diverse topics, actively aligning our work with the conference theme creates an atmosphere of openness, curiosity, and collaboration. This deliberate approach not only fosters the emergence of fresh ideas but also encourages deeper engagement among researchers, enriching discussions and advancing the field. As design educators, we appreciate the value of thinking innovatively, embracing the exchange of ideas, and exploring diverse perspectives. Recognizing patterns across contexts and employing metaphorical thinking to illuminate complex issues are integral to our practice. If our mission as design educators is to embrace the journey of discovery, our duty as design education researchers is to practice what we preach. By accepting the challenge of reimagining our research within the context of conference themes, we can use these themes as catalysts for generating innovative ideas, fresh perspectives, and promising directions, sparking meaningful discourse and progress in our field.

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