



**Relating Systems Thinking and Design  
2022 Symposium  
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## **Becoming #NewMacy**

### **Prologue**

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Indiana University East | Rochester Institute of Technology | Fielding Graduate  
University | MSU Museum / CoLab Studio | Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

“Becoming #NewMacy” introduced the #NewMacy initiative and the six ACT II Studios held at RSD11 to enact conversations for action.

#NewMacy catalyses conversations for action across disciplines, geographies, and generations through systemic principles, processes, and communities.

#NewMacy creates conditions for enacting productive responses among individuals and communities that bring about change in the near term while planning for and committing to the time span required to effect lasting change. Adopting a structure of themed and design-led Studios as framings for conversations for action, we aim at enabling deep participation through activities such as prototyping, play, exploration, enactment, and improvisation. At RSD11, six #NewMacy Studios created opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary approaches to systemic design through conversations for action: Radiant Circles—Cybernetic Musings on Resonant Forms; Pandemic of Today's AI; Art as

Steersmanship; Panarchy as a Sensemaking Tool; Cultural Premises, Conscious Purpose, and Design; Prototyping Conversation.

KEYWORDS: Pandemics, wicked challenges, second-order cybernetics, systemic change, ontological security, conversation, ontogenetic resilience, recursive feedback.

RSD TOPIC(S): Methods & Methodology, Socioecological Design, Sociotechnical System



**#NewMacy | Conversations for Action<sup>1</sup>**

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## Background

#NewMacy emerged in March 2020 as the pandemic of COVID became the newest global wicked challenge (Pangaro 2021). Since then, little has changed in the fights against pandemics of biology and technology, racism and structural inequities, environment and economics. We embrace the timespan of RSD11 as “the long now” in recognition that these systemic challenges require new scales of effort and expectation across generations. We invoke the original Macy Meetings, which arose from a recognition that understanding purposive systems would be essential for addressing the failures of WWII (Pias 2016). In the 21st century, #NewMacy catalyses conversations for action across disciplines, geographies, and generations through systemic principles,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://newmacy.pubpub.org/>

processes, and communities. #NewMacy creates conditions for enacting productive responses among individuals and communities that bring about change in the near term while planning for and committing to the time span required to effect lasting change.

Our current focus is a new framing for *ontogenesis*, specifically that of developing *new ways of becoming*. To survive in a changing world, we must embrace *resilience* in lieu of security, interpreted as constancy. Hence we substitute *ontogenetic resilience* as our framing intention — and cybernetics as key (Salvaggio, 2022; Westermann, 2022).

### **How might we practice ontogenetic resilience?**

We begin by embracing the human as the basic unit of change. Conversation is the unifying process. We adopt a structure of themed and design-led Studios that are explorations of ontogenetic principles. These Studios identify cultural sites where ontogenetic resilience is needed and where we may pursue inclusive and recursive modes of experimentation. The purpose of the #NewMacy Studio construct is to enable deep participation through activities such as prototyping, play, exploration, enactment, and improvisation. The following Act II Studios<sup>2</sup> enacted conversations for action across the middle days of the RSD11 symposium:

1. Radiant Circles—Cybernetic Musings on Resonant Forms
2. Pandemic of Today's AI
3. Art as Steersmanship
4. Panarchy as a Sensemaking Tool
5. Cultural Premises, Conscious Purpose, and Design
6. Prototyping Conversation

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<sup>2</sup> <https://rdsymposium.org/newmacy-act-ii-studios/>

## Reflection

After the studio sessions, we gathered in #NewMacy ACT III<sup>3</sup> for a final conversation to consider the following questions:

- What's next?
- How do we grow into an increasingly inclusive ecosystem of Studios?
- What new, vital activities will we design?

The dialogue, collaboration, and matchmaking performed in this session served as the means for a recursive process of integration and synthesis—directed toward ongoing, empathetic, intelligent, and sustainable action.

## References

1. Pangaro, P. (2021). #NewMacyMeetings Manifesto. #NewMacy. <https://doi.org/10.21428/0e270dcf.980f6f01>
2. Pias, C. (Ed.). (2016). *Cybernetics. The Macy Conferences 1946-1953: the complete transactions*. Diaphanes.
3. Salvaggio, E. (2022, July 9). *Ontogenetic Resilience*. <https://newmacy.pubpub.org/pub/ontogenetic-resilience>
4. Westermann, C. (2022, July 9). *Ontogenetic Resilience Is the Behaviour of ... #NewMacy*. <https://newmacy.pubpub.org/pub/behaviour-of>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://rdsymposium.org/newmacy-act-iii-re-introducing-stability/>