

# Design new spaces/new interiors: research and didactic for new sustainable futures. From Cumulus Antwerp 2023 to IASDR2023

## ***Sustainable Spaces: exploring new frontiers for interior design education approaches***

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## **1 Introduction**

IASDR 2023 offers the possibility to explore the topic of sustainability. This field of research urgently requires the development of new skills and the training of a new generation of designers, as well as the interior designers and the interior architects. The panel intends to continue the debate and the exchange initiated during the Cumulus Working Group “New Spaces/New Interiors”, presented for the first time at the Cumulus Conference in Antwerp, on April 2023.

Sustainability is capable of connecting disciplines such as architecture, spatial design, product design, service design, research on new materials and building systems that can dialogue and connect for the definition of new operational scenarios.

Knowing that the theme is wide and the actors present in IASDR 2023 are coming from different cultural, historical and academic backgrounds, this panel intends to create moments to meet and exchange without borders.

The panel will feature scholars from five different schools and universities, who will bring the experience of their own school within education, research and practice in the field of sustainability.

## **2 Topic background**

The evolution of behaviors and consumption patterns determines the rapid obsolescence of spaces, products and services especially in community spaces (spaces for travel, work, care and recreation) stimulating quite frequent processes of interior re-fitting and new fit out in adaptive reuse processes in existing building.

This attitude clashes with the urgency to rethink design and construction processes and implementation models of architecture and design to initiate the transition towards ecological approaches to space design. At the same time, spaces must be designed to accommodate communities of inhabitants, temporary or permanent, that are increasingly articulate and sensitive to issues of diversity and inclusion, care and well-being, that must be considered when designing new environments. All these aspects can be considered in relation to the three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, socio-ethical, and economic dimension.

The panel wants to explore the relationship between the design of the spaces and sustainability with the aim of identifying new research and training paths for new generations of designers.

### **3 Thematic link with IASDR Life-Changing Design**

The panel is strictly related to the main topic of the conference “Life-Changing Design”, and in particular is connected with the track Ecosystems, because the discussion will be focused on approaches and strategies to reduce environmental footprint of spatial solutions in order to respect the ecosystems. At the same time during the panel discussions, practices and approaches to the issues of inclusion, well-being and care will be explored as aspects of the socio-ethical dimension of sustainability. The panel is also related to the track Education because the aim is to explore not only the output of the design processes based on sustainability, but also education methods and tools capable of training a new generation of designers and architects who are aware of and able to design with a concretely sustainable approach.

### **4 Aim of the Panel**

The aim of the panel is to:

- Activate and initiate discussions between universities and institutions on teaching sustainability, in particular design for sustainability in interior design and interior architecture courses. By comparing different educational approaches and methods for the environmental and socio-ethical sustainability project, we want to try to define a set of approaches and methods that can be shared.
- Share best practices and case studies based on research activities with a specific focus on environmental and social sustainability in interior design and architecture field.

## 5 Possible discussion points

Possible discussion points are focused on:

- **Environmental sustainability. How to educate environmental sustainability?**

We would ask to the panel members to do a short presentation on their approach (projects/assignments/ implementation in their curriculum) and share their experiences with the attendees and the participants in the panel.

Themes to be explored include:

1. new ecological thinking to initiate interior design projects;
2. the application of design for sustainability strategies to interiors: sustainable FF&E (furniture, fixture & equipment);
3. Use of materials (local materials, innovative materials, recycled materials,...);
4. Waste management and the alternative approach of circularity;
5. Production processes of interior products and furniture (recycle, easy disassembling, upcycle, second hand, ...);
6. Connection/interconnection between the structure of the building and the interior.

- **Socio-ethical sustainability. How to educate social sustainability?**

We would ask to the panel members to do a short presentation on their approach (projects/assignments/ implementation in their curriculum) and share their experiences with the attendees and the participants in the panel.

Themes to be explored include:

1. new forms of living and working to reduce the impact of the build environment on nature;
  2. hybridization processes and time-based approach to interior design;
  3. community engagement during design process, (interior + service design);
  4. co-design processes to activate communities;
  5. the cultural memory value of existing buildings and their adaptive re-use, etc.
- **Exploration of interesting link between socio-ethical and environmental sustainability.**

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#### **About the Authors:**

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**Inge Somers:** PhD, Interior architect. She is the coordinator of education of the interior program of the University of Antwerp. Her research focuses on the evolution of interior architecture as an academic discipline, the development of interior theory, interior education and social sustainability. She published her findings in The International Journal of Interior Architecture + Spatial Design and the Journal of Interior Design. She initiated and is co-president of the European Interior Educators and is member of the research group Henry van de Velde, more specifically of the research cel LabDesem.

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