Social Design: Designing for a Changing World

DesArDo lab - Design, Interior Architecture and Audiovisual Documentation Laboratory

This session explores human-centered design processes and principles that prioritize values such as equity, human dignity, mutuality, participation, cultural recognition, and diversity respect. As we face global challenges including the housing crisis, resource depletion, armed conflicts, and climate-related disasters, it becomes increasingly vital to consider how design can contribute to the improvement of human well-being. In this context, the session explores inhabitation as a critical and contested notion amid ongoing and overlapping crises: economic, environmental, political, and health-related. Rather than treating dwelling as a static or neutral condition, it is framed as a dynamic and negotiated practice, shaped by displacement, vulnerability, and acts of resistance. We aim to examine theoretical perspectives, practices and fresh design ideas and cases that explore and bridge tradition and innovation. Particular emphasis will be placed on design practices, artistic interventions, and critical research that propose alternative forms of inhabiting space: mobile and temporary housing, communal living systems, ecological shelters, and hybrid digital– physical environments. We welcome contributions from artists, designers, architects, theorists, and activists who engage with inhabitation not merely as spatial occupation, but as a political, embodied, and affective practice.

Sub-sessions

1. Housing Crisis and Participatory Design

This sub-session invites contributions that examine how inhabitation is transformed under conditions of crisis and uncertainty. We welcome research and design projects that respond to:

- *Forced migration and refugee settlements, where notions of home are redefined through transience, precarity, and reterritorialization;*

- *Urban gentrification, which displaces longstanding communities under the guise of regeneration and aesthetic renewal;*

- *Post-pandemic domesticity, where COVID-19 reconfigured the boundaries between work, care, and shelter;*

- *Environmental degradation, which renders entire geographies uninhabitable due to fire, flood, or drought, and demands new models of spatial and social adaptation.*

2.   Design and Community (Commons, Care, and Collective Living)

This sub-session explores how design can cultivate collective forms of inhabitation and shared spatial practices. From co-housing and cooperative urban models to rural community projects, contributions may examine how care, interdependence, and commoning practices shape new ways of living together. We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary and translocal perspectives that rethink spatial justice and social infrastructure. How can design foster belonging and mutual support in contexts of fragmentation, mobility, and crisis? How can spatial practices challenge extractive models of property and privatization? How Commons transcends the division of public and private space? How Commons transform public space?

3.   Cities of the Future - Redefining the Character of Habitability

Taking into account that cities are living organisms that evolve, adapt, test and redesign themselves and that by utilizing the existing building stock and modern urban regeneration their design is called upon not only to respond to the needs of the present, but also to withstand the challenges of the future, the role of participatory design is explored for a new reality, where architecture, technology, the circular economy and environmental awareness co-shape more resilient and humane cities.

This sub-session explores the role of design in creating a new development model – sustainable, functional and coherent that can answer of the questions

- *The carrying capacity of cities and the protection of the right to habitation.*

- *The social effects of tourism in city neighborhoods.*

- *The management of urban center abandonment and the role of Airbnb*

- *The design of a new type of tourist accommodation considered as a form of temporary housing*

4.   Art, Representation and the Politics of Dwelling

This sub-session focuses on artistic and visual practices that critically engage with the politics of inhabitation. How is the idea of "home" imagined, contested,

or evoked through its absence in visual culture? How do photography, film, installation, performance, or digital media represent displacement, precarity, and the search for shelter? We invite contributions that explore how art can visualize or unsettle dominant narratives of belonging, property, domesticity, and exclusion. Particular interest lies in works that challenge normative aesthetics of home, give voice to marginalized experiences, or propose speculative forms of spatial imagining. Representation here is not merely symbolic but capable of shaping affective geographies and social imaginaries.

5. *Traditional Materials and Innovative Practices: Reinventing Tradition*

This sub-session focuses on traditional design practices as a source for innovation. How traditional materials concerning craft-based design practices, could produce new design meanings and innovation? How the documentation of intangible cultural heritage could contribute to improving the quality of life of marginalized populations? How environmental differences and local resources that have produced the variety of our material cultural heritage, could be used to produce valuable product meanings? We welcome also innovative methods in recycling (which is also ancient method) as an alternative to the negative impacts of mass production

6. *Design Ethics and Social Responsibility*

This sub-session focuses on the ethical dimensions of design and the corresponding social responsibilities of designers in generating a positive impact on human life. It examines the extent to which design practices shape user well-being, safety, and accessibility; how design can contribute to environmental sustainability and ecological balance; and the ways in which it may foster cultural sensitivity through respect for traditions, recognition of identity diversity, and the avoidance of stereotyping. Furthermore, it considers the potential of design to advance ethical innovation in the service of society at large. Case studies demonstrating the practical application of these considerations are also welcome.