

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

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Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with  
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## SUSTAINABLE DESIGN R&D

### Bringing University and training design towards Sustainability

#### Abstract

##### Context

Until now, Universities of art and design in Switzerland aren't applying a significant integration of criteria's and objectives issued from the Sustainable Development model, in term of their missions, activities and searches. Current pedagogies in the various fields of design (interior, industrial and graphic) are missing tools, knowledge and methodologies, to adapt the different training lessons to the challenges of the Sustainable Development.

Teaching Sustainable issues in design professions embodies a huge potential to change the current development issue. Indeed, as a professional of the project and conception, the designer interacts in the early stage of projects and takes place in networks of decision makers and actors from economic, social and cultural disciplines. He also identifies and sets up needs, desires and visions, which have direct impacts on the material stock management and way of product use.

The characteristic of the training in design is this extremely widened pallet of competences – allied with artistic creativity and interdisciplinary work approach – could be the best ambassador of the messages for Sustainable Development. Design Universities could become an innovative place of ideas, concepts and searches for exploring this new way of living and working, with the quality of an aesthetic, inventive and desirable design.

Sustainable-Design R&D goal are the search and development of specific teaching aids and strategies for Universities of art and design with their specific teaching fields, to help them for integrating consequently and transversely the criteria's of Sustainable Development in their activities and missions.

##### Research plan

For this project we use academic and Agenda 21 (UN) methodologies. To cross those methods implies to have a research plan dependent on the objectives, but not on stages related to tools. The objectives are separate in three groups:

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-To find and analyze information according to following criteria's: administrative structures, contents of the courses and material conditions.

-To imply the actors to the development of methods and tools for the application of Sustainable Development principles.

-To propose recommendations and tools adapted to the context with the support of specialists.

We used, developed or adapted specific tools to reach these objectives. This tools development carried out the essential part of the research task.

## Results

This project will not be finished until end of April 2008. That's the main reason why the results that we currently have are not validated, but we can already precise the following elements:

For the information search, we developed specific questionnaires, which enabled us to obtain rich and clear results. The tools to analyse these results were developed with the implication of the actors, in order to define which elements are priority in the fields and missions.

The actors were implied via information meetings, conferences, workshops or personal talks. The participation rate was approximately 35%.

## Conclusions

The project will be finished in the coming three months. We don't have actually all the elements allowing us to make a final conclusion. However, we will be able in July 2008 to present the complete project content with all elements.

During the investigation, we often met a strong rhetorical problem in ethics and values. The important polarisation in media and politics between the two principal models of development influenced our frame conditions during our whole investigation. (2005 - 2007) We recognize clearly, that designers are important actors in both development models, and that they currently work with values and ethics in the project, which have all-important ecological, economical and social issues.

The state of art allowed us to see that some design methodologies are close to the methods specific to the Sustainable Development and that Universities of art and design can play a key role in the development of those and methodologies towards Sustainability.

The analysis of our methods will enable us to discover the weak points of them in order to improve them.

The tools and methods developed in this search make it possible for a University of art and design to step forward by taking in consideration economic, structural, environmental, artistic, teaching, social and human contexts in their missions and activities.

## Image

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