

Syllabus

course description

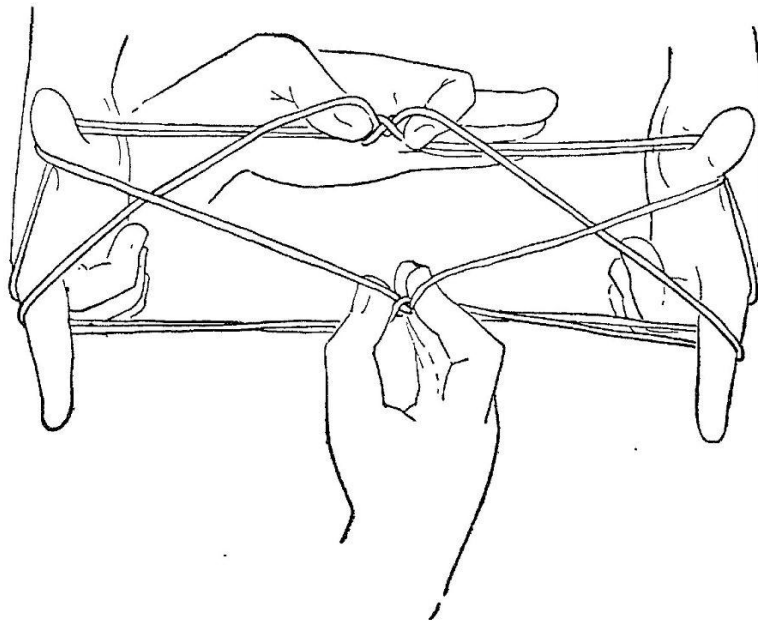
The course belongs to the class “caratterizzante” (obbligatoria) in the MA in Eco-Social Design (LM-12). This course is a compulsory subject in the area “Projects”

Course title	STRING FIGURES – transforming together Area: Project 1 in Eco-Social Design
Course code	96100
Scientific sector	ICAR/13 – Disegno industriale
Degree	Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)
Semester	I
Year	1st and 2nd
Credits	12
Modular	No
Lecturer Group A	Karl Emilio Pircher office F4.02, e-mail karl.pircher@unibz.it , tel. +39 0471 015329 Webpage https://next.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/37175-karl-pircher
Lecturer Group B	Angelika Burtscher office F4.02, e-mail Angelika.Burtscher@unibz.it tel. +39 0471 015329 Webpage https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/48976-angelika-burtscher
Scientific sector of the lecturer	Prof. Pircher: ICAR/13 Prof. Burtscher ICAR/13
Teaching language	English
Total lecturing hours	90 + 90
Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	about 210
Attendance	highly recommended

Prerequisites	Experience in self-motivated and -organized project work
Course page	https://www.unibz.it/it/faculties/design-art/master-eco-social-design

Course description

Project description group A (Prof. Pircher) & Project description group B (Prof. Burtscher):



STRING FIGURES transforming together

»...we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles.«
Donna Haraway, 2016

In *Project 1* students and teachers/researchers of the MA Eco-Social Design collaborate with *OfficineVispa*, a cooperative doing social work in Bolzano Don Bosco. Students will be introduced to other local stakeholders, citizens, persons from public administration and local politics to develop workshops and small-scale interventions that foster social-ecological transformations on a local level. After an introductory phase serves to get familiar with the situation and each other, students will form groups of approximately three. Each group chooses its focus and works in a dialog with the

external partners, stakeholders and teachers/researchers. This involves research in the field and of the state-of-the-art supported by the course in *Design Research*, conceptual framing and critical reflection also involving learnings and teachers from the courses of the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*, hands-on experimentation and prototyping supported by tools and teachers of area *Make & Intervene*.

Societal transformation is a long-term process, and a semester is short. Therefore, we will build upon the experiences of past collaborations in Don Bosco, and develop workshops and small-scale interventions, which have the potential to activate actors and citizens and enable future steps after the semester. *OfficineVispa* is planning to do a Festival in summer/autumn 2024, in which the workshop will play a key role.

Which kind of workshops and small-scale interventions? All workshops and interventions act on issues related to social-ecological transformation and a development of the neighbourhood towards solidary and sustainable modes of production and living. Each student team is asked to pick one topic from a list, which has been created based on both past experiences in Don Bosco and on transformation research (such as public space as a commons, green and biodiversity, adaptation to climate heating, care, the feminist city, food, surveillance, circular economy, solidary economies, learning and unlearning, social justice, inclusion, social infrastructures, mobility, housing, participation, etc.)

The project should be of interest and attractive for the diversity of dwellers of Don Bosco or for specific groups in the neighbourhood (finding a language, style and instruments that work for the desired type of participants). For each workshop or intervention the student teams will design effective and reusable formats, processes and tools, which trigger creativity, imagination interconnections, follow up activities and eventually change dominant narratives, immaginairs and identities.

Workshops and interventions can be based on custom-made games, physical objects and tools, interactive applications, specific spatial setups, debate, sensory experiences, bodily activities, debate, all kinds of interaction, ...

The workshops and small-scale interventions will be developed in an interactive and shared process with at least three test sessions each, improving step by step, inviting and activating the desired type of participants and creating a (small) community. Each week at least two student teams do test sessions. Once a week the whole group will share experiences from the tests for benefiting from each other and learning together. At the end for each workshop the student team designs and produces a manual and the final tools, which enable others to conduct it.

At the end of the semester each projects' outcomes and key elements of the process will be presented in diverse forms:

- ➔ as a portfolio page on the website (based on a shared template)
- ➔ an exhibition within the end-of-semester exhibition of the faculty and/or in Don Bosco

- ➔ a booklet (based on a shared template), which serves as a catalogue for the exhibition (to be handed over to partners and stakeholders)

The annual theme *Staying with the Trouble?* serves as a background. It is inspired by the book with the same title by Donna Haraway, but not limited to it. *String figures* play an important role in the book (together with other sf-words/concepts):

»sf is a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures. Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works, something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn't there before, of relaying connections that matter, of telling stories in hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing on terra, on earth. String figures require holding still in order to receive and pass on. String figures can be played by many, on all sorts of limbs, as long as the rhythm of accepting and giving is sustained. Scholarship and politics are like that too—passing on in twists and skeins that require passion and action, holding still and moving, anchoring and launching.«(Haraway, 2016)

This sounds like a perfect briefing for the workshops and interventions, too.

Practically the project development will be accompanied in diverse formats, such as

Plenum, Collaborative Work Session and Inputs, usually on Mondays, 14:00–18:00, in University, Atelier F4.01

Review & Support Sessions, for each student team; usually in 30 min time-slots on Tuesdays (after the introductory phase), in University, Atelier F4.06 and other space on the same floor, where each student team has its own workplace.

La Rotonda Sessions, Co-Working at OfficineVispa's community centre "La Rotonda" in Don Bosco. Usually on Tuesdays all day during the introductory phase. This includes common lunches, to which each one brings something.

Furthermore, there will be walks, lectures, discussions, workshops, creative and convivial activities at Karl's farm (on a Saturday) and eventually an excursion. Overarching activities include *Reading & Designing Circles*, *Community Learning Sessions* and self-organised student activities.

Illustration from Jayne (1906)

Educational objectives

the educational objectives need to refer to the Dublin Descriptors: please confirm or delete/adapt

Group A (Prof. Pircher) and Group B (Prof. Burtscher)

Students will be able to:

- develop projects in eco-social design from define urgencies to prototyping
- collaborate with partners, experts and other designers to develop, prototype and test an integrated project;
- analyse the context of projects, conceptually frame them and explore potentials
- create and develop projects in an integrated way, with an interplay of diverse elements like social interactions, spaces, products, services, cross-media communication, etc.
- think, communicate and act across diverse areas and disciplines. Apply and integrate instruments and knowledge from Design Research and from the chosen courses in the areas *Observe, Analyse & Apply* and *Make & Intervene*. Find for synergies across all areas
- make complex issues tangible by design, visualization and storytelling
- collaborate with partners and experts and other designers to develop and implement an integrated project
- prototype, and partially implement and test projects
- learn quickly and adapt to given situations and their contexts
- propose and develop projects which will contribute to local development while considering the global context, starting from a “glocal” vision, which “focuses on the global and planetary dimension and the local one at the same time” (from the Dizionario Treccani);
- integrate socio-economic aspects and sustainability requirements in project design
- adopt and invent project methods that comply with the requirements and with the needs of the project and its stakeholders
- work with interdisciplinary, international and multidisciplinary teams
- organize and manage creative processes
- organize, manage and motivate a team
- develop an individual way of thinking, leading to critical judgements and self-assessments. Apply critical thinking as it is taught in the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*
- balance inspiration and systematic planning
- balance more intuitive ways of working with more analytical ones
- design by taking into account the needs and desires of a given territory, of a situation/set of circumstances, of a specific group of people, thanks to the ability of observing, listening, interacting and mediating amongst various stakeholders involved in the project. Apply methods learned in the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*
- think and understand what it means to take responsibility in a design process / project
- Think critically about a space – spatial critical practice – and reflect on what constitutes a space and its multiple interests and interdependencies

- Negotiate a space between individual and common interests

The gained abilities vary from student to student, depending on their background and on their own focus.

List of topics covered

Shared part:

Project description group A (Prof. Pircher) & Project description group B (Prof. Burtscher):

Eco-Social Design for/with CARE and CONTEXT-SPECIFICITY in neighbourhood relations, public space, public life and public debate

Specific part (Object–Space–Services)

Project description group A (Prof. Pircher):

Design of objects, (temporary) spaces, exhibitions and events

Specific part (Communication–Interaction–Services)

Project description group B (Prof. Burtscher):

Design strategies, visual communication, media tactics and facilitation for eco-social transformations, commons and commoning

Not all topics will be treated with the same depth for all students. Students can focus on specific topics and depending on the teachers will provide specific input in groups and individually. Students are encouraged to ask for this proactively.

Teaching format

Project group A (Prof. Pircher) & Project group B (Prof. Burtscher):

Project-work with a balanced mix of field trips, lectures, exercises and experiments, workshops, presentations and reviews (individually and in groups), interventions by external experts

Learning outcomes

Group A (Prof. Pircher) & Group B (Prof. Burtscher)

Knowledge and understanding

- understand the potential and restrictions of given settings, the connected issues and actors / stakeholders, considering available capacities, recourses, instruments and technologies
- understand the requirements and potentials of a project, including all the above mentioned

Applying knowledge and understanding

- be able to conceptually frame projects, integrating competences and knowledges from Design Research and from courses of the area *Oberserve, Analyse & apply*
- be able to co-create original ideas for effective projects, aiming at desirable and viable Eco-Social transitions
- be able to develop effective projects in given situations (see above) with the above mentioned aims
- setup and organize a project according to its requirements, across all phases: initial research, finding, project development, exploration and experimentation, prototyping, testing and publishing / exhibiting.
- be able to design and build mockups, functional models and/or other artifacts, which make the project tangible and testable, integrating methods and skills from courses of the area *Make & Intervene*
- Integrate approaches, knowledges, methods, competences, skills and technologies from multiple fields and (design) disciplines

Making judgments

- be able to critically assess potentials and restrictions of given situations and settings (see above), and estimate strength, challenges, risks and prospects
- be able to review projects critically, to understand what is working, what could be improved (and how)
- apply instruments and knowledges from other courses, regard to making judgments, in particular critical thinking as learned in courses of the area *Oberserve, Analyse & Apply*

Communication skills

- think, communicate and act across diverse areas and disciplines
- be able to present and discuss their own project successfully (in diverse settings, using appropriate media and modes)
- be able to communicate and collaborate in teams, with partners, stakeholders and potential users or audiences

Learning skills

- learn quickly and adapt to given situations and their contexts
- understand own capacities and limitations, and understand, where, when and how to involve other experts / partners, for certain competences, roles and tasks

Group A (Prof. Pircher)

Knowledge and understanding

understand practices, methods and strategies of design of objects, (temporary) spaces, exhibitions and events.

Group B (Prof. Burtscher)

Knowledge and understanding

understand practices, methods and strategies in design for eco-social transformations, commons and commoning, in particular regarding the use of visual communication, interactions design, media tactics and facilitation.

The focus within this spectrum depends on the interest of each student and on the needs of their project, as if the main part of the teaching happens in individual consultancies of project teams and single students.

Assessment

Throughout the semester the work-in-progress are critically and constructively discussed.

At the end present, critically reflect and discuss their works. They will design and set up an exhibition with the works within the end-of -semester exhibition of the faculty and/or in Don Bosco.

All presentations include the demonstration of tangible outcome in the form of mock-ups, models, prototypes, videos, documentation of interventions or events, and/or other designed artefacts. For the presentation, students are asked to use media and speech in convincing and attractive ways that motivate understanding and interest among the audience of the presentation. The presentation has to be done in a way that also works for external partners and stakeholders.

For each workshop and small-scale intervention the team designs and produces a manual and tools, which enable others to conduct it.

Additionally, a documentation has to be submitted (as portfolio web pages and booklets). It communicates the project including its development process. This essential documentation should be concise and attractive for interested audiences, like: fellow designers and practitioners, partners and stakeholders of the project, potential collaborators, participants, users and/or consumers of the project, etc.). The format of the documentation will be defined and communicated two weeks before the end of the semester at the latest. By the end of the academic year it will be integrated in the so-

called **transfolder** containing outputs of all courses. This is thought to share production and to enable cross-fertilisations among the diverse courses.

Assessment language: English

Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks

Group A (Prof. Pircher) & Group B (Prof. Burtscher)

1. **Eco-Social agency**
Impacts and potentials for positive eco-social change
2. **Qualities the of designed artefacts**
Aesthetic and technical qualities, and in how far these qualities foster the eco-social agency. How they build upon the state of the art in your chosen field and (design) disciplines. Boldness and vigour of experimentation and design exploration.
3. **Conceptual framing, reflection and future perspectives**
Understanding of the given situation, relevant actors and the potential for positive change. Critical analysis, synthesis, reflection and evaluation. Understanding of iterative development and future perspectives.
4. **Relations, processes and organization**
Understanding and managing relations and processes with the project team, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and other actors. Project management.
5. **Storytelling**
Effectiveness and potential in communicating the project to relevant publics. Quality and effectiveness of presentation techniques and narrative. How well the story attracts attention, convinces and touches audiences. Defense of your proposition and your response to critics.

All works have to tackle all 5 qualities. Particular weight is given to the interplay between *eco-social agency* (1), the *qualities of the designed artefacts* (2) and *conceptual framing, reflection and future perspectives* (3).

Readings

Group A (Prof. Pircher) & Group B (Prof. Burtscher)

Required readings

A selection of short texts, which are used for the *Reading and Designing Circles*. To be provided at the latest one week before each Circle.

arki_lab: [Designing Cities With Young People](#), Copenhagen

Deutsche, Rosalyn: Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy. PDF:
<https://www.konstfack.se/PageFiles/24768/deutsche%20pub;ic%20art%20and%20democracy.pdf>

Fezer, Jesko & Studio Experimentelles Design (2016): *Öffentliche Gestaltungsberatung—Public Design Support 2011–2016*, Sternberg Press Ltd, London

Gehl, Jan & Birgitte Svarre (2013), *How to study public life*, Island Press

Gibson-Graham, J.K. and Ethan Miller (2015): *Economy as Ecological Livelihood*, in Gibson, Katherine, Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher (Eds). *Manifesto for the Living in the Anthropocene*. Brooklyn, NY ([PDF](#) of the article; [whole book](#))

Gruendl, Harald, Ulrike Haele, Marco Kellhammer, Christina Nägele (IDRV): [Tools for the Design Revolution. A handbook for sustainable design strategies](#), Institute of Design Research Vienna
German Version: [Werkzeuge für die Designrevolution. Ein Handbuch für zukunftsfähige Designstrategien](#)

Habermann, Friederike (2016): *ECOMMONY – re-care to mutuality*, Chapter 1: The Favour of the Day ([unofficial translation](#))
Original (in German language): *Ecommony. UmCARE zum Miteinander*, Ulrike Helmer Verlag ([PDF](#), CC BY-NC-SA)

I.L.A. Kollektiv (2019): *At the Expense of Others?*, oekom, Munich ([PDF](#))

I.L.A. Kollektiv: *Das Gute Leben für Alle – Wege in die solidarische Lebensweise*, Munich, 2019 ([free PDFs](#))

Haraway, Donna (2016): *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press

Helfrich, Silke and David Bollier (2019): *Free, Fair, and Alive – The Insurgent Power of the Commons*, New Society Publishers

Kadi, J., Vollmer, L., & Stein, S. (2021). Post-neoliberal housing policy? Disentangling recent reforms in New York, Berlin and Vienna. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 28, 353 - 374.

Kallis, G.; Kostakis, V.; Lange, S.; Muraca, B.; Paulson, S.; Schmelzer, M. (2018): Research on Degrowth. In: *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 43(1).

Kern, Leslie (2021): *Feminist City. Claiming Space in a Man-made*. Verso

Krasny, Angelika, Elke Fitz / Architekturzentrum Wien (2019): [Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet](#), MIT Press

Manzini, Ezio, and Rachel Coad (2015): [Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation](#). Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

Müller, Christa, Andrea Baier, Tom Hansing (Ed.) [Die Welt reparieren. Open Source und Selbermachen als postkapitalistische Praxis](#) (visions, reflections and cases; Open Access to PDF)

Stavrides, Stavros (2019): Common spaces of urban emancipation. Manchester University

Pater, R. (2021). [Caps Lock: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It](#). Valiz Press.

Raworth, Kate: [So you want to downscale the Doughnut ? Here's how](#). PDF: [Creating City Portraits](#)

[Rendell, Jane: Critical Spatial Practice](#). PDF: <https://www.janerendell.co.uk/essays/critical-spatial-practice>

[Rendell, Jane: Only resist: a feminist approach to critical spatial practice](#). PDF: <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/only-resist-a-feminist-approach-to-critical-spatial-practice>

Welzer, Harald (2019): Alles könnte anders sein. Eine Gesellschaftsutopie für freie Menschen , S. Fischer. chapter: Modulare Revolution (p. 185 - 192) [scan \(PDF\)](#); [unofficial English translation](#)

Welzer, Harald, and Sommer, Bernd (2015): [Transformation Design: A Social-Ecological Perspective](#) in Jonas, Wolfgang / Zerwas, Sarah / von Anshelm, Kristof (Ed.) Transformation Design – Perspectives on a New Design Attitude, Birkhäuser

Wright, Erik Olin (2010): Envisioning Real Utopias, London, Verso

A few inspiring things in the web

[arki lab](#) “is an interdisciplinary urban design studio – defined by our strong focus on democratic processes. We uncover local knowledge through our engaging tools and turn dreams into urban interventions, design and strategies. We’re securing people’s right to co-create the city and thereby developing vibrant and sustainable communities.”

[Assemble Studio](#), develop “a democratic and co-operative working method that enables built, social and research-based work at a variety of scales, both making things and making things happen.”

[Atlas of Utopias: 2019 Transformative Cities Featured Initiatives](#)

[C40 cities. Around the world, C40 cities are taking bold climate action, leading the way towards a healthier and more sustainable future.](#)

[Civic Infrastructures](#) “investigates social, material and technological means for addressing ongoing change processes in current societies”

ethicsofcare.org

[La Foresta](#), Accademia di Comunità, Rovereto

[Öffentlich Gestaltungsberatung Hamburg](#)

[Pirate Care, a syllabus](#)

[raumlabor](#)’s “spacial proposals are small scale and deeply rooted in the local condition”, but inspired on “great ideas”.

[The Human Scale](#), documentary on the work of the Danish architect and urbanist Jan Gehl. He has studied human behavior in cities through 40 years, and consultant several cities regarding the use and design of public spaces, so they serve human and social needs. A particular focus is on how people move.

Walker Art Design Studio: <https://walkerart.org/visit/studio>
([Lectures](#) by some of the most adventurous designers practicing today.)

Triennale Design Museum (Podcasts, Magazine): <https://triennale.org/>

Sophie Krier: In Search of the Pluriverse: <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/events/op-zoek-naar-het-pluriversum>