

## SYLLABUS

### course description

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

Course title	<b>Design Research related to project 1 and 2</b>
Course code	<b>96102</b>
Scientific sector	<b>ICAR/13</b>
Degree	<b>Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)</b>
Semester	<b>I and II</b>
Year	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>
Credits	<b>6</b>
Modular	<b>No</b>
Lecturer	Teresa Palmieri e-mail: <a href="mailto:Teresa.Palmieri@unibz.it">Teresa.Palmieri@unibz.it</a> webpage: <a href="https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/47597-teresa-palmieri">https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/47597-teresa-palmieri</a>
Scientific sector of the lecturer	<b>ICAR/13</b>
Teaching language	<b>English</b>
Teaching assistant (if any)	-
Office hours	<b>9 in Semester 1</b>
Teaching language	<b>English</b>
Total lecturing hours	<b>30 in Semester 1</b>
Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	<b>about 60</b>
Attendance	<b>strongly recommended</b>
Prerequisites	-

## Course description

Students are introduced to the contemporary design research landscape, with special reference to eco-social design, by asking 'What is design research?' past and present while understanding how eco-design and social design evolved. Different types of research (e.g. primary, secondary, qualitative, quantitative, action research, constructive, polydisciplinary) are identified. Students learn about core design research activities including: contextual inquiry; framing through state of art literature reviews, theories, methodologies, and approaches; ways of developing research questions and design briefs; research-through-design; ways of involving others through participatory design, co-design and (participatory) action research; and exploring artifacts as messages, means, outputs and outcomes through the research project. Students are encouraged to construct and generate their research approach based upon an interweaving of **research, design and social actions** and consider the importance of artifacts to support such actions. Research approaches, methods and tools are contextualised to the annual project theme "Staying with the Trouble" and for the first semester applied in the context of the neighborhoods of Casanova and Don Bosco, Bolzano working with the not-for-profit organisation Officine Vispa and for the second semester in diverse project areas defined through the Partner Forum. Student teams are free to develop their projects according to their own motivations, talents and potentials taking advantage of the rich toolbox of design research.

## Educational objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Plan, prepare, scope, set intentions, define a territory or terrain, define a focus or foci, in order to initiate a design research project.
- Undertake a detailed contextual inquiry of their chosen project area, including a literature review, contextual review including knowing people, place and other specifics, define key actors and stakeholders, map the terrain, locate their position and orientate themselves.
- Identify and frame contextual insights, map and frame the problem(s) or problematic and opportunities.
- Generate research questions from the project initiation and contextual inquiry phases.
- Generate a design brief from the project initiation and contextual inquiry phases.
- Choose relevant theories, approaches, strategies, methodologies and practices to undertake **research/design/social actions** in a specific social setting chosen as relevant to the contextual study. Then, devise experiments and gather data followed by subsequent analysis, synthesis and critique to understand the results.
- Understand the value of artifacts as means to gather data, understand contexts, encourage participation and dialogue, visualise and materialise concepts, tell stories and propose solutions.
- Drive processes of ideation, concept generation, prototyping, testing, iterating in order to frame potential solutions to problems identified in a design brief.
- Drive processes of artifact creation and construction as messages, means, outputs and/or outcomes.

- Integrate artifacts in a novel and creative way in the design inquiry.
- Monitor and evaluate the impacts of their experimentation and prototyping in order to critique and reflect upon the outputs and outcomes.

In addition, *depending upon the specific context of their chosen project*, they will be able to:

- collaborate with experts and other designers to develop and implement an integrated project;
- take into account the environmental, social and economic impacts occurring within the tension between global and local dimensions and that characterise a local territory or community;
- facilitate and promote the participation of different stakeholders;
- 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;
- develop an individual way of thinking, leading to critical judgements and self-assessments;
- design products, services, web platforms or other interactive applications, communication campaigns, visualization of information and/or other types of visual communication and multimedia in an integrated way;
- 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;
- integrate the sustainability requirements in the project and in one's own design;
- organize and manage creative processes within a team environment
- adopt appropriate and relevant methods for their development (for example participatory design, user-centered design, action research, large group facilitation, project management);
- understand specialist literature so as to integrate it within their own research project;

**Knowledge will be acquired in the following fields:**

- The relationship between design theory, practice and research *and* their application to real life contexts and managed projects.
- The diversity of contemporary design research practice and its application to the emerging field of Eco-social design.

**List of topics covered**

- Design research, past and present
- Design research for eco-design, social design and Eco-Social Design
- Initiating a design research project, especially state of art review and contextual inquiry
- Design approaches, frameworks, methodologies, methods, tools and processes
- Understanding the diverse roles of artifacts in design research
- Research-through-design
- Participatory design and co-design approaches, methods, tools and processes
- Understanding the complementary nature of research/design/social actions
- Developing a generative praxis and reflexive skills as a design initiator, facilitator, researcher and practitioner

**Teaching format**

Lectures, seminars, workshops, exercises, group projects, external visits and colloquia during Semesters 1 and 2. During workshops and exercises students will be given time to develop and apply research approaches, methods and tools to their team projects. Testing tools and discussion of their application in projects will be made on location (where appropriate) and in the atelier.

**Learning outcomes****Knowledge and understanding**

- Students will be able to integrate design research into their projects by being able to choose appropriate ways of framing their research approach as a means of inquiry, a means to generate outputs and to achieve positive impacts in the contexts they chose to act.
- Students are encouraged to integrate different types of knowledge, methods and practical research from other courses (Observe, Analyse & Apply and Make & Intervene) wherever this makes sense.

**Applying knowledge and understanding**

- Students will have demonstrated how and why they integrate design research into their projects; and how they chose the approach, methodologies, methods and tools they applied.
- Students will have demonstrated how they applied design research to generate/construct their design outputs and outcomes; and the benefits and limitations of their approach.

**Making judgments**

- Students will have been able to assess the relevance and value of different design approaches, methodologies, methods and tools to the development and results of their projects.

**Hands-on skills**

- Students will show their hands-on abilities to creatively build artefacts, experiments, interventions, processes etc. to generate knowledge and insights for their projects.

**Communication skills**

- Students will show their abilities to engage actors, collaborators and/or stakeholders through their chosen research approach and also effectively communicate where design research aided the development of their projects.

### Learning skills

- Students will develop an ability to choose appropriate research approaches to be able to combine their research/design/social actions into an effective design project.

### **Assessment**

You will be assessed on your abilities to *apply* and *integrate* design research with your Project 1 in Semester 1 and Project 2 in Semester 2. Assessment of this course will therefore be conducted at the same time as presentations are made for your projects. For each project students should articulate their approach and processes of *design research* and demonstrate how these helped *materialised design outputs* and *encouraged positive eco-social design outcomes*. Students should be able to explain how design research was utilized in the following phases, for each project in the presentation and in the visual essay:

**Phase I Initiation and Exploration** comprises initiation of a design research project, state of the art review, contextual inquiry, framing contextual insights, mapping and framing problems or the problematique and opportunities.

**Phase II Generation and Construction** comprises three interweaving lines of research inquiry. Line one is **Research actions**, generating research questions, choosing theories, approaches, strategies and methodologies, devising and setting experiments and gathering data then analyzing and synthesizing from a critical perspective. Line two is **Design actions**, generating a design brief, ideating and generating concepts, prototyping, iterating, framing solutions and monitoring and measuring impacts. Line three is **Social actions** where design research or interventions were carried out in a particular social setting and context.

**Phase III Evaluation** comprises reflection on the key findings from *all* lines of inquiry, recognition of the new knowledge created, how to make that public, its potential for positive societal change and how the 'design qualities' might contribute to that potential.

**Assessment language:** English

### **Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks**

Students will be evaluated on the following criteria at the final presentations for Project 1 (30%) and Project 2 (30%) and expected to produce a Visual Essay, maximum 4.000 words for the final exam (40%) summarizing how they integrated their research into Project 1 and Project 2:

1. **Eco-Social agency**

You should show your research approach helped generate impacts and potentials for positive eco-social change.

2. **Qualities the of designed artefacts**

You should demonstrate the rationale for developing artifacts for your

research/design/social actions and their effectiveness to progress your research inquiry by answering questions, generating data, engaging actors and stakeholders and prototyping solutions. You should show far these qualities foster the eco-social agency. How they build up on the state of the art in your chosen (design) disciplines. Boldness and vigour of experimentation and design exploration.

3. **Conceptual framing, reflection and future perspectives**

You should demonstrate how you initiated your project showing: the 'state of art' and early contextual inquiry setting out the terrain of your project and your starting position; and your critical analysis, synthesis, reflection and evaluation of your research. You should demonstrate the iterative development of your research within your project and how it generates future perspectives.

4. **Relations, processes and organization**

You should demonstrate how processes with the project team, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and other actors affected the research process and project development.

5. **Storytelling**

You should demonstrate how your research informed the development of your project narrative and how you chose to make it public.

## Required readings

Koskinen, Ilpo; Zimmerman, John; Binder, Thomas; Redström, Johan and Wensveen, Stephan. 2011. *Design Research Through Practice. From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*. Amsterdam: Morgan Kaufmann/Elsevier.

Sanders, Elizabeth. B. N., and Stappers, Pieter Jan. 2012. *Convivial Toolbox. Generative research for the front end of design*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

Simonsen, J. and Robertson, Toni. 2013. *Routledge international handbook of participatory design*. New York: Routledge.

Gunn, Wendy, Otto, Ton and Smith, Rachel Charlotte. *Design Anthropology Theory and Practice*. 2013. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

DiSalvo, Carl (2022). *Design as Democratic Inquiry*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Gray, Carole and Malins, Julian. 2004. *Visualising Research. A guide to the research process in art and design*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

## Supplementary readings

Inspiration through Design activism, Design for Social Innovation, Design for Sustainability, Critical Design, Participatory Design, Design Anthropology etc. Other readings will be suggested in the course classes.

Fry, Tony. (2009). *Design Futuring. Sustainability, Ethics and New Practice*, Sydney: UNSW Press.

Mazé, Ramia, Olausson, Lisa, Plöjel, Matilda, Redström, Johan and Zetterlund, Christina. (2013). *Share this Book. Critical perspectives and dialogues about design and sustainability*. Axl Books.

DiSalvo, Carl. (2012). *Adversarial Design*. Cambridge, MA and London, UK: The MIT Press.

- Dunne, Anthony and Raby, Fiona. (2013). *Speculative Everything. Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming*. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: MIT Press.
- Ehn, Pelle, M. Nilsson, Elisabet and Topgaard, Richard (2014) *Making Futures: Marginal Notes on Innovation, Design, and Democracy*. MIT Press.
- Fuad-Luke, Alastair. (2009). *Design Activism. Beautiful strangeness for a sustainable world*, London: Earthscan.
- Malpass, Matt. (2017). *Critical Design in Context*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Manzini, Ezio. 2015. *Design, When Everybody Designs. An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Massachusetts, MA: MIT Press.
- Schwarz, Michiel and Krabbendam, Diana. 2013. *Sustainist Design Guide*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.
- Till, Jeremy, Awan, Nishat and Schneide, Tatjana. (2013). *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture*. Routledge.
- Thorpe, Ann. (2012). *Architecture and Design versus Consumerism. How Design Activism Confronts Growth*. Routledge.
- van Abel, Bas, Lucas Evers, Roel Klaassen & Peter Troxler. (2010) *Open Design Now. Why Design Cannot Remain Exclusive*. Rotterdam: BIS Publishers, Creative Commons Netherlands and Premisela.
- Vaughan, Laurene. (2017) *Practice-based Design Research*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Göransdotter, Maria. (2020). *Transitional Design Histories*. Umeå Institute of Design Research Publications, Dissertation.
- Smith, Rachel Charlotte. (2016). *Design Anthropological Futures*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Binder, Thomas, De Michelis, Giorgio, Ehn, Pelle, Jacucci, Giulio, Linde, Per and Wagner, Ina. (2011). *Design Things*. MIT Press.
- Le Dantec, C. (2016). *Designing publics (Design thinking, design theory)*. Cambridge London: MIT Press.

The following international conferences show the extensive landscape of contemporary Design Research in Europe and internationally:

Design Research Society <https://www.designresearchsociety.org>

NORDES Nordic design research conference: latest 2021 (title: matters of scale)  
<https://archive.nordes.org/index.php/n13> , upcoming 2023 (The Space intentionally left blank).

Participatory Design Conference: latest 2022 : <https://pdc2022.org/>

Research Through Design: <http://researchthroughdesign.org>

What can Design do? talks: <https://www.whatdesigncando.com/talks/>