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 | TPP – thesis preparation project  
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Course description

The main objectives of Project 3, which is dedicated to the preparation of the final thesis project, are to support the students find relevant and appropriate topics, to help them navigate and plan the research and development of their projects and to enter an active, productive and self-responsible working process. Students will be encouraged and supported on developing new competences, investigating new practices and establishing a culture of experimentation and exchange. This includes finding and developing forms of discourse, action and learning that foster students to facilitate ambitious projects and an interesting and reasonable proposition for their final thesis project. The course will follow the annual theme “Staying with the Trouble” (Haraway, 2016) as a lens to deal with complexity of ever-increasing crises deeply entangled with the thesis themes.

Project description group A (Prof. Secil Ugur Yavuz):

Students will be accompanied individually and in small groups during the work to find the topic for their Master final thesis work. Throughout the semester, research work is accompanied by meetings with experts, possible stakeholders, by proposing in-depth studies, experiments, field work, exercises and various practical formats aimed at opening up spaces for reflection on methods and approaches to one's own theme and in general to eco-social design. The range of possible and relevant activities will respond to necessities and urgencies that the research process will reveal. They will be encouraged to apply and implement the methods and thematic research on practical, prototypical model experimentation. The whole process should be accompanied by the elaboration of tangible models, probes, tools corresponding to the respective purpose. The results of this process may turn out in different formats such as videos, photos, interviews, sketches, mappings, drawings, experimentations, prototypes, public
interventions, participatory design activities, events or written conclusions and should be documented and evaluated in an appropriate form.

**Project description group B (Prof. Franceschini):**

Students will develop specific methodologies of research, using participative tools to install new dynamics of change. They will identify the situation from which their projects emerge; temporal, spatial, political, environmental and imagine unconventional collaborative partnerships and formats of exchange. A focus will be placed on methods of experimental ethnography, collective actions and hands-on formats; performance, workshops, listening, mapping, walking...

Within student design projects we will initiate processes of self-organisation that create convivial, social spaces that can grow beyond the instigation by the designer.

Rapid prototyping, models, drawing participatory presentations will be used to articulate ideas into material form.

**Design Research (Prof. Palmieri)**

Students are introduced to an expanding design research landscape, with special reference to eco-social design, by exploring contemporary and aspiring design theory, and relevant case studies as well as research projects, especially all knowledge needed to generate meaningful and powerful design outputs. Current terms like “decolonizing design”, “radical interdependence”, “more-than-human” approaches, and others, get discussed collaboratively.

Early teaching sessions are aimed at helping students to initiate their research project, by exploring the chosen context by empirical means, developing skills for contextual inquiry (interview and observation skills), and undertaking literature reviews to generate a critical knowledge base. The exploration starts on multiple levels.

In the second phase, the already gained insights are funneled into a design brief. Research and design questions are generated. An extensive time and research plan will be compiled – easily accessible through visual means – to set up a concrete vision of which directions are possible to take for a great thesis process. In the phase of defining, a first positioning of the thesis takes place.

In the next phase, different mapping exercises will be applied to get closer to the needed thesis components: to identify the possible human and non-human actors to establish a fertile network, to identify possible leverage points of the research context, or identifying first meaningful action points/possibilities – be it in experimental interventions or self-observations. So, a phase of generating first design outputs, which get reflected by the elaborated theoretical knowledge, takes place.
In the final phase, evaluation, students will critique, reflect, synthesise and re-frame their project in order to realise new knowledge, make it public and assess the project’s potential for societal change. Different models of impact analysis will be applied. This evaluation helps to initiate the concrete proposal for the thesis project.

During all phases, particular emphasis will be given to the use of experimental artifacts in these actions.

Educational objectives

Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz)

Students will reflect about their personal skills, attitudes, interests, concerns in order to align them with eco-social issues in their local/global sphere. Going into the field, having a practical experience with the geographical, political, economic and social setting as well as its culture and history, will encourage students to learn to trust their intuitions, mistrust their first assumptions, and improve their making skills, design potential and research methodologies.

The activities on field and the workshops promote the creation of tools, probes, artefacts for the inquiry leading to a dynamic and ever-changing social design practice. By getting in contact with local organizations and institutions, encountering people the students will map stakeholders for their projects.

Students are invited to research about their theme, adapting it to the project flow and its possible changes of focus. The research is intended as a practice-based design research as well as a field research and is going to be documented and shared with a possible public through using diverse ways of presenting.

Students are encouraged to work in exploratory and experimental ways, developing rough mockups, material experimentations, models, sketches, visualizations and prototypes, for making ideas visible, tangible and experienceable.

Communication skills will be improved and sharpened mapping and visualizing the process of the project in the different phases of development and creating a visual archive of their field research documentation.

Students will be able to:

- Conceive and develop projects in eco-social design from problem finding to prototyping
- Research on the projects theme, including field research, collecting information, narratives, interviewing and reading
- Develop an iterative design cycle that informs each process constantly seeking answers to the questions of “what,” “how,” “why,” “where,” and “for whom.”
- Analyze the context of the project, map stakeholders, approach external experts, find for synergies across all areas and collaborate with partners
• Think, communicate and act across diverse areas and disciplines. Make complex issues tangible by design, visualization and storytelling
• Plan, organize and manage the project defining objectives and deadlines
• Be aware of hidden meanings and bring critical reflections by looking at them from different perspectives
• Take decisions and imagine their possible impacts
• Create hands-on prototyping, implementing and testing their hypothesis. Consider it in a long term period through a speculative approach. Evaluate its sustainability and possible market placement.

**Knowledge will be acquired in the following field:**
Eco-social topics and social challenges in the areas of Product-, Service-, System-, Event- and Exhibition Design, common and relational spaces/artefacts design.

**Group B (Prof. Franceschini)**

“The raison d’être of any art project in public space is to create a contrast, unfold a conflict and even add more conflict to make it visible.” – Fulya Erdemci, director of SKOR

Instead of pre-set hierarchies, a small gesture stands for a plurality of means of expression, a plurality of competing life worlds, but at the same time it emphasizes that both of these are only possible if there is enough room for something called reasonable disagreement and loving conflict. In one significant way, I want to deny the often-used excuse that claims there are no alternatives. Instead, it is and it always will be about how we can both articulate and push those alternatives forwards – and back again.
- Mika Hannula, The Politics of the Small Gesture

...The job of the contemporary designer is too large for any single individual, they reasoned. The labor entailed—theorizing, writing, planning, funding, executing the work, travel—could be competently handled only by a team. So the five original members of Critical Art Ensemble—though membership is no secret, they prefer anonymity—organized into one entity. - Critical Art Ensemble, The Interventionists, Nato Thompson

Experimental ethnographic approaches will be explored including the use of “relational objects” whereby non-verbal exchange can open new modes of engagement. Students will shape active situations of engagement as a means to collect data and build relations with stakeholders. These actions will be performative and include the use of material elements which are theoretically grounded and not afraid of provoking clashes, collisions and uncertainty.
Students will experiment with various forms of the “interview”. We will draw from documentary film strategies and artistic research methods which move beyond a meeting in a room with a microphone and “subject” to a more engaged relation with the interviewee. We ask, how can these engagements of time form new / lasting relations? How can we offer time in return for these interview sessions? What can we offer that lends to mutual benefit?

Students will use archival research to locate historical precedents and framing mechanisms that situate the work within a temporal continuum; past, present and future. Students will be able to position their projects within broader frameworks of the social, political and environmental.

Students will be urged to reflect on “duration” in terms of how long their project should last, how long they personally should be involved and when local stakeholders should come into a project. Students will carefully shape the relations, processes and organization of exchange and development with their stakeholders.

Various forms of communication will be explored as means to reach diverse audiences; languageless comics, sound, radio, workshops, rogue advertising, product placement...Intimacy and the small gesture are to be considered powerful tools.

**Students will be able to:**

- Create modes of engagement with stakeholders that are thoughtful, challenging and mutually beneficial.
- Match praxis with theoretical rigour.
- Research infectiously.
- Produce appropriate forms of communication.
- Forecast scenarios related to their work; temporal, spatial, social...

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

- Position projects within broader frameworks of the social, political and environmental landscapes.
- Critical approach to innovation and production of new materials and products, i.e. life-cycle, socio-political conditions under which the products are made, where the material originates and how it is produced, environmental impact of materials.
- Care and Generosity and Reciprocity in communicating with stakeholders
- Team Work/ Collaboration- presentation skills, scheduling and distribution of tasks/defining roles.
- Scale models - How to iterate through small scale models and rapid prototyping
Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):

Students will be able to:

• Plan, prepare, scope, set intentions, define a context, define a focus, in order to initiate a design research project – individually or as a collective
• Undertake a detailed contextual inquiry of their chosen project area, including literature reviews, contextual review including knowing people, species, places and other specifics, define key actors and stakeholders, setting up a (human and non-human) network, map the terrain, locate their position and orientate themselves.
• Identify and frame contextual insights, map and frame the problem(s) and challenges.
• Generate research and design 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 and methodologies to undertake research actions. Then, devise experiments and gather data followed by subsequent analysis, synthesis and critique to understand the results.
• Drive processes of ideation, concept generation, prototyping, testing, and iterating in order to frame potential solutions to problems identified in a design brief. Monitor and evaluate the impacts of their experimentation and prototyping in order to critique and reflect upon the outcomes.

Knowledge will be acquired in the following field:

• The relationship between design theory, practice and their application to real life contexts and managed projects.
• The complementary relationships between design theory and other theories e.g. philosophy, sociology, transition theory, needs theory, sustainability theory, and how these are best integrated into contemporary Eco-Social design practice.

List of topics covered

Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz):
- Space, object & interaction
- Object narratives / Object biographies
- Product design / social design
- Practice-based design research
- Embodied Design
- Discursive Design - Critical Artefacts
- Complexity and Design
- Trouble Making through Design
- Thinking with Things

**Group B (Prof. Franceschini):**

- Archival Research - Historical Precedent
- Situated Practice
- Rapid-Prototyping – Thinking through making
- Refusal - ethical reasons, temporal ...
- Experimental Ethnography - Relational Objects, non-verbal exchange
- Communication Strategies/ Platforms
- Durational Approach
- Unconventional Partnerships
- Value in local stakeholders

**Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**

- Design research approaches, frameworks, methods and processes
- Recap from P1 and 2 approaches like Participatory Design/Research through Design, plus methods and processes for the different stages of the research process, including co-design, critical making, and speculative design
- The roles of artifacts in the research process, for example in: Engaging people, encouraging dialogue, fostering understanding, creating attention through provocation and/or irritation, changing perspectives or behaviour – as propositions, interrupters, future possibilities and visions
- Social Design approaches including Transformation Design, Transition Design, Design Activism, Design of/for/in/as democracy, Adversarial design, Critical and speculative design, Open design, and more...
- Developing reflexive social design skills as a practitioner and researcher
- Developing your ethical and responsible approach in eco-social design (reflecting the role of an eco-social designer, with other humans and species; understanding systemic malpositions and their consequences for the society and earth)

**Teaching format**

Fortnightly plenum where students and teachers meet to discuss ongoing issues, schedule etc.
Colloquia (1-2)
Mid-Term - Desktop Jam
Working Groups - Teams host a four hour session once per semester.
Newsletter (bi-monthly, one page, printed and posted in public)
**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz) and Group B (Prof. Franceschini):**
All teaching formats are governed by the latest laws and regulations from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, the province of Alto Adige/South Tyrol and the Italian government in relation to the COVID-19 situation. Check the latest updates here, [https://www.unibz.it/en/home/covid-19/](https://www.unibz.it/en/home/covid-19/). Please refer to the detailed programming updated weekly. The aim is to provide a blended learning environment of some face-to-face teaching with online teaching.
Project days are: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

**Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**
All teaching formats are governed by the latest laws and regulations from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, the province of Alto Adige/South Tyrol and the Italian government in relation to the COVID-19 situation. Check the latest updates here, [https://www.unibz.it/en/home/covid-19/](https://www.unibz.it/en/home/covid-19/). Please refer to the detailed programming updated weekly.

**Learning outcomes**

**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz) and Group B (Prof. Franceschini)**

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

**Applying knowledge and understanding**
- 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
- be able to design and build mockups, functional models and/or other artifacts, which make the project tangible and testable

**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)
Communication skills
● be able to present and discuss the own project successfully (in diverse setting, using divers media and modes)
● be able to communicate and collaborate with partners, stakeholders and potential users or audiences

Learning skills
● be able to quickly learn the knowledge and skills necessary for the own project
● understand own capacities and limitations, and understand, where, when and how to involve other experts / partners, for certain competences, roles and tasks

Knowledge and understanding
● understand basic methods and tactics of media communication, of brand design and of visual communication

Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):

Learning outcomes
Knowledge and understanding
● Students will be able to integrate design research into their thesis 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 impact in the contexts they chose to act.

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.
● Students will be able to demonstrate how they evaluated their outputs and outcomes and reflect on how their design research approach was successful or how it could be improved.
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 eco-social design project.

Assessment

**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz), Group B (Prof. Franceschini) and Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**

You will be assessed on an integrated approach to **Project 3 combined with Design Research** over three **obligatory** phases. At each phase of assessment (two colloquia and the final exam), students are expected to make a 15-minute verbal presentation about their project. The presentation should be accompanied by edited documentation evidencing the student’s processes, *artifact generation and construction, and design research*. Students should explain how these were utilized to justify decisions about subsequent or future work.

The phases are as follows:

**Phase I Initiation and Exploration** comprises initiation of a design research project, contextual inquiry, framing contextual insights, mapping and framing problems or the problematique, and generating initial research questions and/or a design brief(s). At the first Masters Colloquium, on 02.11.2022, you will be expected to choose to be supported by Group A professor, with a focus on 3D design (Objects Spaces Services), or Group B professor, with a focus on Communications design, but support can continue from both professors.

**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*, implementing your design interventions or new processes/modes of eco- and social-production in your chosen social setting(s).

**Phase III Evaluation** comprises reflection on the key findings, 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 of Phases II and III is at the Masters Colloquium on 07.12.2022.

**Phase IV Thesis project proposal** comprises a fully justified proposal for a Thesis project for Semester 4. This will include appropriate reference to how Phases I to III helped scope and develop the project, a well-defined issue with appropriate actors, stakeholders and audience, a well-defined problem or problematique, a visualization of how the project fits into a system view, a projection of how the project could impact to deliver positive potential for Eco-Social change, including the potential for contributing to alternative/heterodox/circular economies, and an outline project plan. Assessment of Phase VI is at the Final Exam on 24. or 25.01.2023.

By the end of the semester, each student must deliver documentation, text summary and visuals, of the project as an integral part of the exam. Exact format to be specified two weeks before the exam. **At the end of the semester, all projects are exhibited during the GOG exhibition within the faculty. Besides, materials for web portfolio and press must be delivered.**

**Assessment language:** English

**Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks**

**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz), Group B (Prof. Franceschini) and Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**

Student presentations will be assessed under the following general criteria:

- Attitude and passion
- Classical design qualities (novelty, originality, form, function, state of the art in your chosen design sub-field or field)
- Commitment
- Demonstration of competences
- Materialisation of design work (tangible, intangible, digital, analogue, aesthetic and technical qualities)
- Quality of the documentation

And under the following **specific** criteria:

1. **Eco-Social agency**
   You should show how your design processes, artifacts and communication of your project, combined with your research approach, helped generate impacts and potentials for positive eco-social change.

2. **Qualities of the designed artefacts**
   You should demonstrate how the aesthetic and technical qualities of your designed artifacts foster the eco-social agency. Show how they build up on the state of the art in your chosen (design) disciplines. Priority will be given to the boldness and vigour of experimentation and design exploration. You should also demonstrate the rational 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.

3. **Conceptual framing, reflection and future perspectives**
   You should document: the ‘state of art’ and early contextual inquiry setting out the terrain of your project, your starting position and your framing of the context and its challenges. You should show your critical analysis, synthesis, reflection and evaluation of the artifacts and research process throughout your project. You should demonstrate the iterative development of your research within your project and how it generates new perceptions, present and future.

4. **Relations, processes and organization**
   You should demonstrate how processes with the project team, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and other actors affected the generation/construction of artifacts, and how it affected the research process, project management and development.

5. **Storytelling**
   You should demonstrate the effectiveness and potential of your artifacts and research process in communicating the project to relevant publics. Quality and effectiveness of presentation techniques and narrative are important, including how well the story attracts attention, convinces and touches audiences. You should demonstrate how your research informed the development of your project narrative and how you chose to make it public. You will also be assessed on how well you defended your proposition and your response to critics.

The examination takes place at the end of Phase IV.

Project documentation has to be delivered three days before the exam at the latest.

The documentation should communicate the project together with design research, enriched by outcomes from all the courses students take in this semester. This essential documentation should be concise and attractive for interested audiences, such as: 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 4 weeks before the exam.

**Required readings**

**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz)**
- Porritt J, The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050, Phaidon, 2013.

**Group B (Prof. Franceschini)**

**Artist as Protagonist** - Compiled by : Åse Løvgren and Karolin Tampere

**The Politics of Small Gestures** - Mika Hannula: Chances and Challenges for Contemporary Art

**The Devil and Commodity Fetishism** - Michæl Taussig Chapter One

**What We Want is Free** - Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art: Chapter: Blows to the Empire.

Edited by Ted Purves

- The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction, Ursula K. LeGuin
- The Pushcart War
- Moments Before the Wind - Notes on Scenography - Joze Wouters
- Critical Art Ensemble - http://critical-art.net/

Interventions and Provocations: Thirty Years of Critical Art Ensemble

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUMoxpBx_K0
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBO21p5mrTo
- Toward a Lexicon of Usership, Stephen Wright
- Tanja Brugera/ Arte Util - https://www.arte-util.org/about/activities/
- Why Art is Useful | Alistair Hudson -https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJU7So2X0WI
- Between the Material and the Possible: Infrastructural Re-examination and Speculation in Art, Bassam El Baroni
- Film: Manufactured Landscapes, Edward Burtynsky.

**Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**

The following books are focused on the approaches, strategies, tactics, tools and roles that design researchers can adopt:


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

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

European Academy of Design https://eadresearch.org/

NORDES Nordic design research conferences http://nordes.org/

Research Through Design (RTD) conferences https://www.researchthroughdesign.org/

**Group A (Prof. Ugur Yavuz)**
- Design for migration. A repository for design projects that deal with migration issues: [http://designformigration.com/](http://designformigration.com/)
- 4Cs - From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture: [https://www.4cs-conflict-conviviality.eu/](https://www.4cs-conflict-conviviality.eu/)
- Project based platform inquiring current artistic and urbanistic strategies, methods and tools for urban development: [http://urban-matters.org](http://urban-matters.org)
- Ezio Manzini "The Politics of Everyday Life: How to Implement a design-based collaborative democracy": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-KL1zSpr2E
- Social Design Cookbook: http://socialdesigncookbook.com/
- The Design Justice Network: https://designjustice.org/

**Group B (Prof. Franceschini)**

My Cocaine Museum - Michael Taussig

Situation - From Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Edited by Claire Doherty

BUILD-YOUR-OWN-HEADLANDS-RESIDENCY KIT Cooley Windsor

**Design Research (Prof. Palmieri):**


I.L.A. Kollektiv (2019): At the Expense of Others?, oekom, Munich  