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	**Design Research related to project 1 and 2**
Course code	**96102**
Scientific sector	**ICAR/13 (new: CEAR-08/D)**
Degree	**Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)**
Semester	**I and II**
Year	**1st**
Credits	**6**
Modular	**No**
Lecturer	Sonia Cabral Matos (1st semester) e-mail: Sonia.CabralMatos@unibz.it webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/48172-sonia-matos office: F4.04
Scientific sector of the lecturer	**ICAR/13**
Teaching language	**English**
Teaching assistant (if any)	-
Office hours	**9 in Semester 1 and 9 in Semester 2**
Total lecturing hours	**30 in Semester 1 and 30 in Semester 2**
Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	**about 60**
Attendance	**strongly recommended**
Prerequisites	**-**

Course description

This course introduces students to the design research landscape focusing on eco-social transformation. While integrating lectures with hands-on exercises, we will explore different research tools, methods, and approaches within real-live projects. The course introduces students to qualitative research that is design-led, participatory, and action-based, with the view of framing a given context and developing research questions and design briefs while at the same time involving others through participation and co-creation. Most importantly, the course focuses strongly on exploring artefacts as a means through which we can more actively involve research participants. Students are encouraged to construct and generate novel research approaches based upon an interweaving of well-established research tools and methods, as well as design and social actions. We will work in Bolzano's Don Bosco neighborhood in the first semester while collaborating with the not-for-profit organization Officine Vispa. In the second semester, we invite students to develop a project within the context of the Partner Forum.

Educational objectives

Students will be able to:

- Undertake a detailed contextual inquiry of a chosen project area, including a literature review and contextual investigations, including knowing people, places and other specifics whilst defining key actors and stakeholders, mapping the terrain, locating their position, and orientating themselves.
- Generate research questions and a design brief from the project initiation and contextual inquiry phases.
- Devise design research-led experiments and gather data followed by subsequent analysis, synthesis, and critique to understand the results.
- Understand the value of artefacts to gather data, encourage participation and dialogue, visualize, and materialize concepts, tell stories, and propose solutions. In the end, to integrate artefacts in a novel and creative way in research.
- Drive design ideation, concept generation, prototyping, testing, and iterating processes to frame potential solutions to problems identified in a research brief.
- Monitor and evaluate the impacts of their experimentation and prototyping 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.
- Consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts occurring within the tension between global and local dimensions that characterize 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 other types of visual communication and multimedia in an integrated way.
- Design by considering 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 one´s design.
- Organize and manage creative processes within a team environment.

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:

- Probing qualitative and design-led research for eco-social transformation.
- Exploring the role of artefacts in research.
- Participatory and co-design approaches, methods, tools, and processes.
- Developing 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

On completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate the following:

Create

- Identify well-established research methods alongside inventive approaches to research for their projects.
- Build artefacts, experiments, interventions, processes to generate knowledge and contextual insights for their projects.

Apply

- Demonstrate how and why they integrate design research into their projects; and how they chose the approach, methodologies, methods, and tools they applied.
- Demonstrate how they applied design research to generate/construct their design outputs and outcomes, and the benefits and limitations of their approach.
- Assess the relevance and value of different design approaches, methodologies, methods and tools to the development and results of their projects.

Communicate

- Engage actors, collaborators, and stakeholders through their chosen research approach.
- Effectively communicate where and how design research aided the development of their projects.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on their ability to apply and integrate Design Research within Project 1 in Semester 1 and Project 2 in Semester 2. Therefore, we will evaluate course results simultaneously with project presentations. Students should articulate their approach and design research processes for each project and demonstrate how these helped materialize design outputs and encourage positive eco-social design transformation. Students should be able to explain how design research was utilized in the following phases for each project in their presentations and later in the Research Appendix:

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 problem 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

Each group of students is expected to produce a Research Appendix for Projects 1 and 2, respectively. Each appendix should contain 3,000 words summarizing how they integrated research techniques, methods, and approaches into their projects. Each appendix will count towards 50% of the final grade. The appointed examiner will use the following evaluation criteria:

1. Conceptual framing, reflection, and future perspectives

Exemplify how you initiated your project by presenting the 'state of the art' and early contextual inquiry and how they helped generate research questions.

2. Qualities of research-driven artefacts

Demonstrate the rationale for developing artefacts for your research and their effectiveness in progressing your inquiry by answering questions, generating data, engaging actors and stakeholders and prototyping solutions.

3. Storytelling
Display your choice of communication formats and explain how they help present your project narrative to your chosen audience.

Required readings:
Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. 4. edn. Los Angeles, Calif. [u.a.: Sage (The Sage handbook of ..).

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

Gray, C. and Malins, J. (2004). *Visualising Research. A guide to the research process in art and design*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Koskinen, I.; Zimmerman, J.; Binder, T.; Redström, J. and Wensveen, S. (2011). *Design Research Through Practice. From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*. Amsterdam: Morgan Kaufmann/Elsevier.

Sanders, E. B. N., and Stappers, P. J. (2012). *Convivial Toolbox. Generative research for the front end of design*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

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

Supplementary readings

Additional readings will be communicated in class.