

Syllabus

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 Area: Project 3 – Design 3, incl. Design Research
Course code	96103
Scientific sector	ICAR/13
Degree	Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)
Semester	3
Year	II
Credits	15 ECTS
Modular	No
Lecturer Group A <i>Communication–Interaction–Services (CIS)</i>	Kris Krois office F4.06a, e-mail: Kris.Krois@unibz.it tel. +39 0471 015224 Webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/893-kris-krois
Lecturer Group B <i>Objects–Spaces–Services (OSS)</i>	Rosario Talevi e-mail: hello@rosariotalevi.com webpage: https://rosariotalevi.com/
Design Research A and B	Sonia Cabral Matos 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

Total lecturing hours	90 Design Project 3 OSS 90 Design Project 3 CIS + 60 Design Research
Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	ca. 350 = 210 Design Project 3 + 140 Design Research
Attendance	Highly recommended

Transdisciplinary and transformative pedagogies

We aim at transdisciplinary and transformative teaching, learning and doing. We try to integrate A, B and Design Research where it makes sense, and have separate contributions to specific questions. Consequently, the following text describes A, B and Design Research together, where nothing else is specified. While specific contributions are marked as such.

Course description

"Start from *us*, not from *them*. We can only start from us. To start in the third person, that dreadful, murderous third person, is already to push us down. Start from ourselves, from where we are, from where we go, from our overflowing against that which contains us. Start from our richness overflowing. Start what? This book: start this book not from fear and enclosure, but from hope and overflowing.

Start this book, or start your thesis, your essay, your talk, your thinking, your design, your gardening, your building, your song, your dance not from fear and enclosure but from richness: now is the time for our hearts to dance. Now is the time to write the poetry of overflowing."

These lines from introduction of *Hope in Hopeless Times* by John Holloway (2022) can serve as an **inspiration and motivation** for all kinds of transformation-engaged activities. For projects and practices aiming at **emancipatory social-ecological transformations**, also the ones developed in Project 3, the first part of the thesis projects in eco-social design and their written counterparts. Thesis and, thus, Project 3 can be done **individually or in teams** (see also [Thesis Guidelines](#)). While the whole group can become a **learning collective**, making use of the diversity of knowledge and experiences of each person, mutually

supporting each other. We would like to co-create a space and process for learning and doing together on-eye level – in the spirit of **commoning, care and circularity**.

During Project 3 the **conceptual, theoretical and practical basis is explored, experimented and built**. This includes an understanding of relevant theories and strategies of transformation, research on case studies and empirical data, elaboration of the conceptual framework, weaving of relations (as collaborators, kins, partners, allies, ...), technical explorations, co-creative processes, tactical interventions, prototyping, mapping, visualisation, storytelling, critical reflection, economic foundations, future perspectives, a plan for the further development, and everything that matters for the project and practice. The final outcomes are presented in a document, in a presentation and an exhibition at the end of the semester (see 'Assessment'). As if this can be infinite, **students will be supported in setting the focus, making decisions, finding partners, case studies and literature, and above all in defining and doing concrete and effective steps**.

Teachers/researchers will contribute lectures and presentations, facilitate workshops and group discussions, offer review and support sessions, organise guest events, site/situation explorations, reading circles, share useful things and ideas via *Teams*, and whatever turns out to be useful, desirable, and viable. **Students are expected to play active roles, bring in their ideas, skills, knowledge, and presence**. They are encouraged to propose and/or organise activities, in cooperation with teachers/researchers or autonomously. Students are supported to work independently and take the initiative in finding the resources they need to develop their projects and practices. Active participation in group activities, attendance at all studio meetings, colloquia, and reviews, and maintaining a consistent level of production are important aspects of the course. Sharing knowledge and ideas with peers is valuable for personal growth. Active presence in the studio and contributing to the collaborative environment is crucial. Failures, frictions and contradictions happen in transformation-efforts. Let's learn by critical reflection and co-creative iterations to deal with unintended effects, dilemmas, and trade-offs. This includes the feeling of being overwhelmed and power-less. Mutual support and collective empowerment can help to restore lightness and the capability of acting.

The three teachers are collaborating closely, offering complementary perspectives, both in team teaching mode and individually, bringing in their specific competences **Rosario Talevi (critical spatial practice and transformative pedagogies)**, **Kris Krois (transformation strategies and design)**, **Sonia Matos (transformation-engaged design research)**. Complimentary competences will be covered by inviting guests and connecting with specialists, stakeholders and affected people in and outside University.

Beyond the mentioned forms of input and collaboration, key formats are the **weekly plenum** including a **check-in (Mon, 14:00)** and the **Master Colloquia**. **Regular times for all are Mondays, 14:00-18:00, Tuesdays all day**. Extraordinary activities such as guest lectures, workshops, or site/situation explorations taking place on other days and times, are communicated in the Plenum and the calendar of the study course.

Important steps (dates and times might change):

1. Start:

Monday, 30.9., 14:00 – 18:00

Plenum and Check-in

Introduction to project 3 and the thesis

Monday, 7.10., 14:00 – 18:00

Plenum and Check-in

Session: **Connecting Concerns**

Tuesday, 8.10., 09:00 – 18:00

Session: **Starting Points** (collective mapping)

2. Master Collegium 1: Desktop Jam

~4-5 weeks after the semester start

Mode/format: For each project, a table is prepared to demonstrate the work-in-progress in ways that enable others to quickly understand key ideas and elements of the project and its underpinnings. Around it, critical and co-creative discussions happen. Are focus, vision and aims clear? Why do they matter? Which are the issues behind the issue? Potentials, obstacles, and risks? Which are open questions and needs you are looking for support? Which partnerships and alliances are already in place, and which would be promising? Anything that matters for the specific projects and practices. We will invite guests to enrich the perspectives.

Purpose: Sharpen projects, enrich them, get support and support each other, identify interconnections and eventually create/expand/reconfigure teams, establish a basis for partnerships and next steps, ...

3. Master Collegium 2: Presentation and discussion

~8-9 weeks after semester start

Mode, format: Presentation of the work-in-progress and discussion with invited guests and all. Critical and co-creative. Touch upon the key elements described under “Exam Presentation” – which are clear? Where are open issues and needs? ...

Key questions: Which things are convincing and strong? Is the story concise and appealing, or what would help to make it so? Which partnerships and alliances are already in place and which would be promising? Where are the problems, obstacles and uncertainties, and how to deal with them? How to extend and grow the potential agency? ...

Purpose: sharpen the focus, formats, form, and storytelling of the project, strengthen agency, get missing elements, partnerships, alliances, ...

4. End-of Semester Exhibition (GOG)

24–25.1.2025

5. Exam Presentation and Discussion

28.1.2025

Mode, format: Presentation of the first phase of the thesis and discussion.

Key elements: Core idea, vision, aims, partners and allies, context and background, economic basis (and challenges), underpinnings based on theories, case studies, own experiments and prototyping, etc.

Include clarity about the focus, about what the project (potentially) can do, and where are limits. Future perspectives could show how certain limits could be overcome (both in concrete follow-up activities, and in a utopia), and everything that matters for the project and practice. (see also 'Assessment')

Purpose: Test how convincing and appealing the project and its storytelling are; get input for future steps.

6. Submission of final document

Submission of final document

3.2.2025

see above and under Assessment

Educational objectives

Students will be able to:

A, B & Design Research

- develop projects and practices aiming at social-ecological transformations, advanced by emancipatory, feminist, intersectional, cross-cultural and transdisciplinary perspectives
- identify the situation from which their projects emerge – temporal, spatial, discursive, political, environmental, social, economical, ...
- prototype, and partially implement and test elements of projects
- collaborate in (unconventional) partnerships and formats of exchange to envision and move towards sustainable and solidary modes of production and living
- gain an understanding of the processes of transformation-engaged design
- think critically and act creatively, individually and together with others
- think, communicate and act across diverse areas and disciplines
- initialize, develop, manage and lead projects
- analyse the context of projects, conceptually frame them, envision and explore potentials

- apply knowledge and methods from social sciences in research and design processes
- use diverse forms of research to underpin and sharpen practices and projects, e.g. literature review, case studies, (participatory) action research, experiments and explorations in the lab and/or social and public spheres
- gain an understanding of theories and strategies of social-ecological transformations, and apply it to projects and practices
- understand how and to which extent specific projects and practices are contributing to a social-ecological transformation
- set the focus of projects and practices, with an understanding of limitations and potentials
- make complex issues tangible by design, visualization, and storytelling
- integrate approaches, skills and technologies from multiple (design) disciplines
- work with diverse stakeholders, such as experts, companies, organizations, communities and affected people
- facilitate social dynamics, participatory processes and teamwork productively

List of topics covered:

A, B & Design Research

Care, conviviality and commoning

Transformative pedagogies and experimental learning

Intersectional feminism

Theories, strategies, and practices of transformation

Design and art of/for transformation

Narrations and (audio/visual) storytelling

A (CIS – Kris Krois)

Critic, utopia and transformation

Outreach strategies

Societal metabolism and solidary circular economy

Postgrowth

B (OSS – Rosario Talevi)

Critical spatial practice

Post-humanism, planetarity, pluriverse, anthropocene, cohabitation

Design Research (Sonia Matos)

Action-Oriented Research

Positionality and Reflexivity

Vulnerability and Ethics

Teaching format

A, B & Design Research

Lectures and presentations, workshops and group discussions, (collective) mapping sessions, review and support sessions, guest events, site/situation explorations, sharing of case studies, reading circles, master colloquia, and whatever turns out to facilitate transdisciplinary and transformative learning.

Learning outcomes

A, B & Design Research

Knowledge and understanding

- understand the potential and restrictions of given settings, the connected issues and actors / stakeholders, considering socioeconomic conditions and available capacities, recourses, instruments, and technologies
- understand the restrictions, risks, requirements, and potentials of a projects and practices
- understand theories and strategies of transformation, and what design can contribute

Applying knowledge and understanding

- be able to conceptually frame projects, based on theories and strategies of transformation, and integrating competencies and knowledge from Design Research and from courses of the area *Observe, 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
- be able together with teams and partners to setup and organize a project across all phases
- be able to design and build mockups, functional models and/or other artefacts, which make the project tangible and testable, integrating methods and skills from courses of the area *Make & Intervene*
- Integrate approaches, knowledge, 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 knowledge from other courses, regard to making judgments, in particular critical thinking as learned in courses of the area *Observe, Analyse & Apply*

Communication skills

- think, communicate and act across diverse areas and disciplines
- be able to present and discuss the 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, audiences and affected people

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

Assessment

A, B & Design Research

At the end of the semester, students exhibit, present, and critically discuss their work and its future perspectives. Additionally, they submit a **document**, laying out a concise conceptual framing, including an analysis of contexts and backgrounds, synthesis of the theoretical underpinnings, empirical data, transformation strategy and tactics, relevant case studies and what is learned from them, documentation of the iterative development process, key moments, elements, activities, prototypes and decisions, maps of partners, stakeholders and allies, critical reflections, possible economic foundations, future perspectives, and everything that matters for the project and practice.

Each project and practice is exhibited at the end of the semester in the frame of the GOG exhibition of the faculty. In this context, works need to communicate with and appeal to a wide audience. The design of the exhibition itself is seen as part of the work itself.

The **complete assessment** will be based on all elements: the **exam presentation and discussion, the submitted document and the exhibition**. Additionally, the **development process and engagement throughout the semester**, also **beyond the own project**, is taken into account.

A short documentation needs to be submitted to **the faculties online showcase**. It needs to speak to all potentially interested audiences, such as current and future students, existing and future external partners, stakeholder and funders, and all, who could benefit from the projects and practices and support them.

Assessment language: English

Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks

A, B & Design Research

1. **Eco-Social agency**
(Potential) contribution to emancipatory social-ecological transformation
2. **Qualities of the 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**
Clarity and coherence of the conceptual framing, including synthesis of the theoretical underpinnings, empirical basis, transformation strategy, understanding of context and backgrounds, relevance of case studies, planning of and learnings from the iterative development process, critical reflections, possible economic foundations, and future perspectives.
4. **Relations, processes and organization**
Quality of relations and processes with the project team, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and other actors. Management of time, resources, and persons (project management).
5. **Storytelling**
Effectiveness and potential in communicating the project to relevant publics. Quality of presentation techniques and narrative. How well the story attracts attention, convinces and touches audiences. Defence of proposition and response to critics.

How elements and qualities discussed under 2 – 5 are contributing to (or hindering) emancipatory social-ecological transformation (criterion #1).

Suggested readings:

A, B & Design Research

Brand, U., Wissen, M. (2018). *What Kind of a Great Transformation? The Imperial Mode of Living as a Major Obstacle to Sustainability Politics*. In: GAIA – Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society 27(3), 287-292.; ([PDF](#))

Brave New Alps, Elzenbaumer, B., Franz, F. (2021). Design(ers) Beyond Precarity: proposals for everyday action. *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*.

Chertkovskaya, E. (2022). A strategic canvas for degrowth: in dialogue with Erik Olin Wright. In N. Barlow, et. al. (eds.). *Degrowth & Strategy – how to bring about social-ecological transformation*. MayFly

Habermann, F. (2024). *Overcoming Exploitation and Externalisation. An Intersectional Theory of Hegemony and Transformation*, Taylor & Francis

Helfrich, S. and Bollier, D. (2019). *Free, Fair, and Alive – The Insurgent Power of the Commons*, New Society Publishers, <https://freefairandalive.org/>

Holloway, J. (2022). *Hope in Hopeless Times*. Pluto Press

ILA Kollektiv (2019). *At the Expense of Others? How the imperial mode of living prevents a good life for all*. oekom, Munich ([PDF](#))

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

Wizinsky, M. (2022). *Design after Capitalism. Transforming Design Today for an Equitable Tomorrow*, The MIT Press

B (OSS – Rosario Talevi)

Casco Art Institute (2019). *Working for the Commons. Unlearning Exercises: Art Organizations as Sites for Unlearning*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Constaza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design Justice - Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*, MIT Press, 2020

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge.

Kaethler (Ed.). (2021). *The Auto-Ethnographic Turn in Design*, Valiz.

Krasny, A., Fitz, E. (2019): [Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet](#), MIT Press

Laderman Ukeles, M. (2019). [Maintenance Art Manifesto](#). In: *View – Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*.

LeGuin, U. K. (1986). [The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction](#).

Mareis, C. and Paim, N. (2021). *Design Struggles Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, Valiz.

Martinis Roe, A. (2018) *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice*. Berlin: Archive Books.

Mortimer-Sandilands, C. (2004). "The Marginal World". In: Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment, edited by Andy Wainwright. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Rendell, J. (2009). Art and Architecture. A Place Between. London: IB Tauris, 2006 Celine Condorelli. Support Structures. Berlin: Sternberg Press

Schouwenberg, L.; Kaiser, M. A.; Stephani, R. (2021). Glossary of undisciplined Design, Spector Books.

Tsing, A. L. (2015). The Mushroom at the End of the World - On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Tsing, A. L., Bubandt, N., Gan, E., & Swanson, H. A. (Eds.). (2017). Arts of living on a damaged planet. University of Minnesota Press.,.

Verg s, F. (2019). "[Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender](#)". In: e-flux Journal #100.

Design Research (Sonia Matos)

Egmose, J.; Hauggaard-Nielsen, H. & Gaarsmand Jacobsen, S. (2022) Action research in the plural crisis of the living: understanding, envisioning, practicing, organising eco-social transformation, Educational Action Research, 30:4, 671-683, DOI: [10.1080/09650792.2022.2084433](https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2022.2084433)

Numans, W., Boog, J., Van Regenmortel, T., & Schalk, R. (2023). Examining the Co-impact of Participatory Action-Oriented Research. Bringing Hidden effects to the Surface. A Case Study. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231199948>

Robles Lomeli, J., & Rappaport, J. (2018). Imagining Latin American Social Science from the Global South: Orlando Fals Borda and Participatory Action Research. Latin American Research Review, 53(3), 597-612. doi:10.25222/larr.164

Sch n, D. A. (2011) The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action. Paperback ed., reprinted. Aldershot [etc: Ashgate.

Smith, L. T. (2022) Decolonizing methodologies research and indigenous peoples. Third edition. London [etc: Bloomsbury Academic.