# Syllabus

## *Course Description*

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| **Course Title** | Thesis Project Phase 1: Transformative Research through Design (B) |
| **Course Code** | 96125 |
| **Course Title Additional** | |
| **Scientific-Disciplinary Sector** | |
| **Language** | English |
| **Degree Course** | Master in Eco-Social Design |
| **Other Degree Courses (Loaned)** | |
| **Lecturers** | Prof. Christian Krois,<br>Kris.Krois@unibz.it<br>https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/893<br>Prof. Dr. Ingrid Kofler,<br>Ingrid.Kofler2@unibz.it<br>https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/18815 |
| **Teaching Assistant** | |
| **Semester** | First semester |
| **Course Year/s** | 2nd year |
| **CP** | 15 |
| **Teaching Hours** | 90 CIS / 30 SDR |
| **Lab Hours** | 0 |
| **Individual Study Hours** | 0 |
| **Planned Office Hours** | 78 |
| **Contents Summary** | "Eco-Social Design 3 supports the development of each student's project and practices. Students are supported collectively and individually in the first phase of their thesis project in elaborating the key issues, focus, aims and co-benefits; in finding leverage points, partners and resources; in learning from each other and from best practices from socially, politically and environmentally |

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| | engaged design; in stitching together theoretical underpinnings with strategic choices; in conceptually framing their project and defining the right scope; in creating a convincing narrative and appealing (visual) storytelling; in exploring possible economic foundations and long-term perspectives; in fieldwork and experimental explorations; and in making things tangible and shaping a (visual) language. Both offers in Eco-Social Design 3 collaborate closely among each other and with the social social sciences modules." |
| **Course Topics** | Theories, strategies and practices of emancipatory social-ecological transformation; communication & social interaction design; organizing, mobilizing & outreach strategies; collective creativity; care, commons & commoning; |
| **Keywords** | social-ecological transformation, emancipation, communication design, social interaction design, organizing, mobilizing, strategies, co-creativity, care, commons, commoning, critique, utopia, social imagination, social practices, material provisioning, materialism, facilitation, participation, self-organisation |
| **Recommended Prerequisites** | commitment, curiosity, care |
| **Propaedeutic Courses** | Project 2 in Eco-Social Design |
| **Teaching Format** | Lectures, presentations & workshops; Weekly plena & check-in rounds; Collective mapping sessions; Review & support sessions; Guest lectures; (Im)possible partner meetings (A conversational format for engaging with transformation-oriented actors who may become project partners); Site explorations; Case study sharing & analysis; Reading circles; Master colloquia with external experts (a feedback session supporting students in developing their thesis project) and formats we develop based on needs and ideas of students, colleagues and partners; |
| **Mandatory Attendance** | highly recommended |
| **Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes** | Educational objectives<br>Knowledge and understanding<br>Students course will have developed their own individual project practice and will be able to: - design, implement and manage projects - initiate, carry out and lead project-oriented research, development and design activities - develop creative solutions and processes - working with and leading multidisciplinary teams - working with different experts, companies, organisations, groups |

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| | and people - designing the aesthetic dimension of projects or collaborating in design - developing prototypes or delegating their development - developing interventions and events or delegating their development - test and evaluate prototypes, interventions, events or their individual elements, or delegate their testing/testing and evaluation.<br>Applying knowledge and understanding<br>Students will be able to: - develop projects and practices suitable for addressing complex challenges. - make tangible ideas, reports and projects, such as sketches, visualisations, mock-ups, models, prototypes, interventions and prototype events<br>Making judgements<br>Students will be able to: - take responsibility for the development and management of projects and activities - judging independently and critically: concepts and drafts, one's own behaviour and contribution (through reflection and self-criticism)<br>Communication skills<br>Students will be able to: - communicate convincingly in different ways and with different audiences - present projects convincingly - argue creative and strategic decisions - communicate productively within the team - lead creative processes and teams<br>Learning skills<br>Students will be able to: - working independently to learn according to different situations and in a personal way through experimentation and planning - working independently to learn according to different situations and in a personal way through the development of prototypes, models, mock-ups and the feedback they provide |
| **Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)** | |
| **Assessment** | At the end of the semester, students exhibit, present, and critically discuss their work and its future perspectives and economic foundation. The complete assessment will be based on all elements: the exam presentation and discussion, the submitted document, a short video and the exhibition. The exam consists of an oral presentation and discussion of the above-mentioned elements. The students submit a document with a description of issues and aims, a contextual review, theoretical and |

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| | methodological framing, a map of stakeholders and partners, a 'theory of change', an outline of obstacles and potentials. and a project plan. Guidelines for the documentation will be provided. As part of their final assessment, students will create and submit a short video (1–3 minutes) that introduces and explains their semester work. This video should communicate the core ideas and objectives of the project in an appealing and convincing story. Each work is exhibited at the end of the semester in the GOG exhibition of the faculty. The short video will be part of the exhibition. 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, stakeholders and funders, and all who could benefit from the projects and practices and support them.<br>Assessment of non-attending students: Non-attending students have the same assessment criteria as attending students. All requested assignments need to be done, and all deliverables (above mentioned) need to be provided in time. |
| Evaluation Criteria | The evaluation process will consider these criteria: 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 |

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| | and response to critics. How elements and qualities discussed under 2 – 5 are contributing to (or hindering) emancipatory social-ecological transformation (criterium #1). |
| **Required Readings** | Proposals for reading circles:<br><br>**Fundamental power-aware critique and alternatives:**<br><br>Habermann, F. (2024). *Overcoming Exploitation and Externalisation. An Intersectional Theory of Hegemony and Transformation*, Taylor & Francis<br><br>**¿ Chapter 2: Intersectional Theory of Hegemony**<br><br>**Commons from a rural Indian perspective, tackling international and national policies, trans-local practices and structures (relevant for many rural areas around the globe):**<br><br>Shiva, V. (2020). *Reclaiming the commons: Biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, and the rights of Mother Earth* (New edition). Synergetic Press.<br><br>**¿ Chapter 6: The Enclosure and Recovery of the Commons**<br><br>**Countering Fascisation:**<br><br>Board, E. (2021, January 7). *Fascism, fascisation, antifascism.* Historical Materialism. https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/fascism-fascisation-antifascism/ |
| **Supplementary Readings** | Barca, S. (2024). *Workers of the Earth*. Pluto Press.<br><br>Brave New Alps, Elzenbaumer, B., Franz, F. (2021). Design(ers) Beyond Precarity: proposals for everyday action. *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives.*<br><br>Bradbury, A., Brenner, M., & Slaughter, J. (2016). *Secrets of a successful organizer*. Labor Notes. |

Brand, U., & Wissen, M. (2025). *Capitalism at the limit: A political ecology of a world in crisis*. John Wiley & Sons.

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

Dengler, C., & Lang, M. (2022). Commoning Care: Feminist Degrowth Visions for a Socio-Ecological Transformation. *Feminist Economics*, 28(1), 1–28.

Groos, J., & Sorg, C. (2025). *Creative Construction*. Policy Press.

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

Iconoclasistas / Risler, Julia & Ares, Pablo (2018). Manual of Collective Mapping.

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

International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies (IRGAC) / kollektiv orangotango (Eds.). (2024). *Beyond Molotovs—A Visual Handbook of Anti-Authoritarian Strategies*. transcript Verlag.

Kollektiv Orangotango+ (Ed.). (2018). *This is not an atlas: A global collection of counter-cartographies* (2nd edn, Vol. 26). transcript Verlag.

Lang, M., Manahan, M. A., & Bringel, B. (Eds.). (2024). *The Geopolitics of Green Colonialism: Global Justice and Ecosocial Transitions* (1st ed.). Pluto Press.

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| | Mühlhoff, Rainer. Forthcoming Nov. 2026. *AI and the New Fascism*. Pluto Press.<br><br>Pater, R. (2021). *Caps Lock: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It*. Valiz Press.<br><br>Rodney, W. (2026 / 1972). *How europe underdeveloped africa*. Verso Books.<br><br>Schmelzer, M., Andrea Vetter & Aaron Vansintjan (2022). *The Future Is Degrowth: A Guide to a World beyond Capitalism*. Verso.<br><br>Saito, K. (2024). *Slow Down. The Degrowth Manifesto.* Astra Publishing House<br><br>Schaupp, S. (2026). The fear of uselessness: From the normalization to the enjoyment of ecological destructiveness. *Thesis Eleven*, 193(1), 204–219.<br><br>Wizinsky, M. (2022). *Design after Capitalism. Transforming Design Today for an Equitable Tomorrow*. The MIT Press |
| **Further Information** | |
| **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** | No poverty, Partnerships fot the goals, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate action, Life below water, Life on land, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Zero hunger |

# *Course Module*

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| **Course Constituent Title** | Design 3 |
| **Course Code** | 96125A |
| **Scientific-Disciplinary Sector** | CEAR-08/D |

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| **Language** | English |
| **Lecturers** | Prof. Christian Krois,<br>Kris.Krois@unibz.it<br>https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/893 |
| **Teaching Assistant** | |
| **Semester** | First semester |
| **CP** | 9 |
| **Responsible Lecturer** | |
| **Teaching Hours** | 90 |
| **Lab Hours** | 0 |
| **Individual Study Hours** | 0 |
| **Planned Office Hours** | 60 |
| **Contents Summary** | Design 3 focuses in particular on communication strategies, media tactics, experience design, interaction and/or service design bringing in best practice from socially, politically and environmentally engaged design. The project leader collaborates closely with Sociological Design Research module to foster transdisciplinary dialogue and actions. |
| **Course Topics** | Theories, strategies and practices of emancipatory social-ecological transformation; communication design; outreach strategies; collective collaboration; organizing; commons & commoning; |
| **Teaching Format** | Lectures, presentations, workshops; Weekly plena & check-in rounds; Collective mapping sessions; Review and support sessions; Guest lectures; (Im)possible partner meetings (A conversational format for engaging with transformation-oriented actors who may become project partners.); Site explorations; Case study sharing and analysis; Reading circles; Master colloquia with external experts (a feedback session supporting students in developing their thesis project proposal) and formats we develop based of needs and ideas of students, colleagues and partners; |
| **Required Readings** | Proposals for reading circles (to be decided with Ingrid Kofler and the students)<br><br>**Fundamental power-aware critique and alternatives:** |

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| | Habermann, F. (2024). *Overcoming Exploitation and Externalisation. An Intersectional Theory of Hegemony and Transformation*, Taylor & Francis<br><br>**¿ Chapter 2: Intersectional Theory of Hegemony**<br><br>**Commons from a rural Indian perspective, tackling international and national policies, trans-local practices and structures (relevant for many rural areas around the globe):**<br><br>Shiva, V. (2020). *Reclaiming the commons: Biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, and the rights of Mother Earth* (New edition). Synergetic Press.<br><br>**¿ Chapter 6: The Enclosure and Recovery of the Commons**<br><br>**Countering Fascisation:**<br><br>Board, E. (2021, January 7). *Fascism, fascisation, antifascism.* Historical Materialism. https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/fascism-fascisation-antifascism/ |
| Supplementary Readings | *Students will be introduced to a wide range of readings. They choose freely what to pick up and deepen depending on the focus of their practice.*<br><br>Barca, S. (2024). *Workers of the Earth*. Pluto Press.<br><br>Brave New Alps, Elzenbaumer, B., Franz, F. (2021). Design(ers) Beyond Precarity: proposals for everyday action. *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives.*<br><br>Bradbury, A., Brenner, M., & Slaughter, J. (2016). *Secrets of a successful organizer*. Labor Notes.<br><br>Brand, U., & Wissen, M. (2025). *Capitalism at the limit: A political ecology of a world in crisis*. John Wiley & Sons. |

Dieck, Andrea (2026). Expropriate & Organize! Combining Strategies of Transformation, in Krois et al. *Hope ~ Reclaiming the Future*. oekom

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

Dengler, C., & Lang, M. (2022). Commoning Care: Feminist Degrowth Visions for a Socio-Ecological Transformation. *Feminist Economics*, 28(1), 1–28.

Fezer, Jesko (2026). Partisan Diagrams, in Krois et al. *Hope ~ Reclaiming the Future*. oekom

Groos, J., & Sorg, C. (2025). *Creative Construction*. Policy Press.

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

Iconoclasistas / Risler, Julia & Ares, Pablo (2018). Manual of Collective Mapping.

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

International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies (IRGAC) / kollektiv orangotango (Eds.). (2024). *Beyond Molotovs—A Visual Handbook of Anti-Authoritarian Strategies*. transcript Verlag.

Kollektiv Orangotango+ (Ed.). (2018). *This is not an atlas: A global*

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| | *collection of counter-cartographies* (2nd edn, Vol. 26). transcript Verlag.<br><br>Krois, Kris, María Menéndez-Blanco, Teresa Palmieri, Anja Salzer (2026). Patterns for Hope, in Krois et al. *Hope ~ Reclaiming the Future*. oekom<br><br>Lang, M., Manahan, M. A., & Bringel, B. (Eds.). (2024). *The Geopolitics of Green Colonialism: Global Justice and Ecosocial Transitions* (1st ed.). Pluto Press.<br><br>Mühlhoff, Rainer. Forthcoming Nov. 2026. *AI and the New Fascism*. Pluto Press.<br><br>Pater, R. (2021). *Caps Lock: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It*. Valiz Press.<br><br>Rodney, W. (2026 / 1972). *How europe underdeveloped africa*. Verso Books.<br><br>Schmelzer, M., Andrea Vetter & Aaron Vansintjan (2022). *The Future Is Degrowth: A Guide to a World beyond Capitalism*. Verso.<br><br>Saito, K. (2024). *Slow Down. The Degrowth Manifesto.* Astra Publishing House<br><br>Schaupp, S. (2026). The fear of uselessness: From the normalization to the enjoyment of ecological destructiveness. *Thesis Eleven*, 193(1), 204–219.<br><br>Wizinsky, M. (2022). *Design after Capitalism. Transforming Design Today for an Equitable Tomorrow*. The MIT Press |

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| **Course Constituent Title** | Sociological Design Research |
| **Course Code** | 96125B |
| **Scientific-Disciplinary Sector** | GSPS-06/A |
| **Language** | English |
| **Lecturers** | Prof. Dr. Ingrid Kofler,<br>Ingrid.Kofler2@unibz.it<br>https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/18815 |
| **Teaching Assistant** | |
| **Semester** | First semester |
| **CP** | 6 |
| **Responsible Lecturer** | |
| **Teaching Hours** | 30 |
| **Lab Hours** | 0 |
| **Individual Study Hours** | 0 |
| **Planned Office Hours** | 18 |
| **Contents Summary** | "This module accompanies Thesis Project 3 and provides students with the foundations of empirical sociological research for eco-social design. While the parallel module Designing through Ethnography focuses on ethnographic inquiry and situated understandings of lived experiences, this course introduces students to the broader landscape of sociological research methodologies and supports them in developing rigorous and context-sensitive research designs for their own projects. Students learn how to formulate sociological research questions, select appropriate research strategies, and critically reflect on methodological choices in relation to their design interventions.<br>The course introduces the principles of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research, addressing issues such as sampling, data collection, data analysis, triangulation, and research ethics. Particular attention is given to the relationship between empirical evidence, design practice and societal transformation.<br>Throughout the semester, students develop the methodological framework for their thesis projects, reflecting on how sociological research can inform design decisions, strengthen collaboration with stakeholders, and contribute to evaluating the social impact of interventions. Reading circles, organised jointly with the Eco-Social |

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| | Design 3 project course, provide opportunities to discuss foundational literature on sociological research, sustainability transformations and participatory knowledge production while relating these perspectives to students' individual projects. The module equips students with the methodological literacy required to design, conduct and critically evaluate empirical research within interdisciplinary and transformation-oriented design contexts." |
| **Course Topics** | Foundations of empirical sociological research<br>Research questions and research design<br>Qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research<br>Sampling strategies<br>Data collection methods (interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, document analysis)<br>Coding and qualitative data analysis<br>Introduction to quantitative data analysis and interpretation<br>Triangulation and mixed-methods integration<br>Research ethics and quality criteria<br>Impact evaluation and theory-based evaluation |
| **Teaching Format** | Frontal lectures, discussions, reading circles, exercises, presentations, group work, reading circles on sociological research and sustainability transformations (jointly with Eco-Social Project 3) |
| **Required Readings** | Bryman, A. (2016). Social Research Methods (Fifth edition). Oxford University Press.<br><br>Corbetta, P. (2003). Social research theory, methods and techniques. SAGE Publications.<br><br>Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (Fifth edition). SAGE.<br><br>Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (Third edition). Sage.<br><br>Flick, U. (2023). An introduction to qualitative research (7th edition). SAGE. |

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| | Flick, U. (2018). The Sage handbook of qualitative data collection. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-data-collection |
| Supplementary Readings | |