Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Thesis Project Phase 1: Research through Design, Exploration and Experimentation
Course Code	96103
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	English
Degree Course	Master in Eco-Social Design
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	Prof. Christian Krois, Kris.Krois@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/893 Prof. Secil Ugur Yavuz, Secil.UgurYavuz@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/36117 Prof. Sónia Amélia Cabral Matos, Sonia.CabralMatos@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/48172
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	2nd year
CP	15
Teaching Hours	90 CIS/90 OSS + 60
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	0
Planned Office Hours	60 CIS/60 OSS + 18
Contents Summary	In Thesis Project Phase 1, students start the first part of the development of their thesis project. In the third semester, students

	choose and explore a topic, challenges or issues within a specific context, collaborating with various partners. They do literature review, case-study analysis, research-through-design and field research to explore their chosen topics. By means of practice-based experiments, interventions, failures and successes students develop the grounding of their thesis project and define their thesis project proposal. This lays the foundations for the subsequent elaboration of the final project and the written part of the Thesis. The course is led by a team of three teachers: a design researcher together with design practitioners, covering the areas Objects–Spaces-Services and Communication–Interaction–Services. They collaborate closely in providing input, facilitating learning experiences and coaching students. Both students and teachers foster transdisciplinary dialogue and actions, among others by involving teachers of the courses of the areas Observe, Analyse & Apply and of Make & Intervene. Additionally, the project teachers organize the Master Colloquia, where external experts from civil society, companies, organisations and institutions are invited to discuss the students' projects.
Course Topics	CIS – Communication-Interaction-Services: Theories, strategies and practices of emancipatory social-ecological transformation Communication design Outreach strategies OSS – Objects - Spaces - Services: Relational Design Material Agency Techno-ecologies and post-humanism Design Research: Action-Oriented Research Positionality and Reflexivity Vulnerability and Ethics
Keywords	eco-social design, project development, experimentation and prototyping, exploring the context/stakeholders and partners
Recommended Prerequisites	

Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	- Lectures, presentations, workshops - Weekly check-in sessions - 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)
Mandatory Attendance	highly recommended
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	Knowledge and understanding 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 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. Applying knowledge and understanding 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 Making judgements 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) Communication skills 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 Learning skills 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. The complete assessment will be based on all elements: the exam presentation and discussion, the submitted document, the short video and the exhibition. The exam consists of an oral presentation and discussion of the above-mentioned elements.

	The students 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. As part of their final assessment, students will create and submit a short video (1–2 minutes) that introduces and explains their semester work. This video should not only communicate the core ideas and objectives of their project but also present an appealing 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, which should also be designed. 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 benefits from the projects and practices and support them. 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 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	Brave New Alps, Elzenbaumer, B., Franz, F. (2021). Design(ers) Beyond Precarity: proposals for everyday action. *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives.* Bollier, D. (2024). Challenges in Expanding the Commonsverse. *International Journal of the Commons, 18(1)*, pp. 288–301.DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1389 Chatzidakis, A., Hakim, J., Litter, J., & Rottenberg, C. (2020). *The Care manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. Verso Books. Haug, F. (2009). *The "Four-in-One Perspective": A Manifesto for a More Just Life, Socialism and Democracy*, 23:1, 119-123, DOI:

10.1080/08854300802635932

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

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

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

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

Int. Research G. on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies kollektiv orangotango (eds. 2024). *Beyond Molotovs – A Visual Handbook of Anti-Authoritarian Strategies.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag

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

Potter, W. (2024, October 29). *Statement Guide to Counter the Far-Right*. The Commons Library. (LINK)

Saito, K. (2024). *Slow Down. The Degrowth Manifesto.* Astra Publishing House

Bafta, S. & Mendívil, E. R. (2025). *The Diversity of Exploitation. On the Critique of Dominant Antiracism*. Brill

Shiva, D. V., Jafri, AH., Bedi, G., & Hollar-Bhar, R. (1997). The Enclosure and Recovery of the Commons: Biodiversity, Indigenous

Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights. *Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology.*

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

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press, USA.

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

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

Chapman, J. (2021) Meaningful Stuff: Design That Lasts. MIT press.

Wakkary, R. (2021). Things We could Design - For More than Human-centred worlds. MIT press.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants. Penguin Books.

Avila, M. (2022). Designing for Interdependence: A Poetics of Relating. Bloomsbury Publishing.

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

	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 Santos, B. de S. (2016) Epistemologies of the South¿: justice against epistemicide. [Online]. London: Routledge. Schön, 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.
Supplementary Readings	
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, 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

Course Constituent Title	Design 3
Course Code	96103A

Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	English
Lecturers	Prof. Christian Krois, Kris.Krois@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/893 Prof. Secil Ugur Yavuz, Secil.UgurYavuz@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/36117
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	9
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	90 (for each module)
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	ca. 350 = 210 Design Project 3 + 140 Design Research
Planned Office Hours	60 (for each module)
Contents Summary	The course is led by a team of three teachers: a design researcher together with design practitioners, covering the areas Objects–Spaces-Services and Communication–Interaction–Services. They collaborate closely in providing input, facilitating learning experiences and coaching students. Both students and teachers foster transdisciplinary dialogue and actions, among others by involving teachers of the courses of the areas Observe, Analyse & Apply and of Make & Intervene. Additionally, the project teachers organize the Master Colloquia, where external experts from civil society, companies, organisations and institutions are invited to discuss the students' projects. The project leaders collaborate closely with Design Research related to Project 3. The project leader in Communication–Interaction–Services 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 in Objects–Spaces–Services supports the development of each student's project and practices, in particular, related to the design of objects, spaces and/or services bringing in best practice from socially, politically and environmentally engaged design. The project leader collaborates closely with "Design Research related to project 3" module.
Course Topics	A (CIS – Communication-Interaction-Services): Theories, strategies and practices of emancipatory social-ecological transformation Communication design Outreach strategies B (OSS – Objects - Spaces - Services): Relational Design Material Agency Techno-ecologies and post-humanism
Teaching Format	- Lectures, presentations, workshops - Weekly check-in sessions - 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)
Required Readings	Brave New Alps, Elzenbaumer, B., Franz, F. (2021). Design(ers) Beyond Precarity: proposals for everyday action. *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives.* Bollier, D. (2024). Challenges in Expanding the

Commonsverse. *International Journal of the Commons, 18(1)*, pp. 288–301.DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1389

Chatzidakis, A., Hakim, J., Litter, J., & Rottenberg, C. (2020). *The Care manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. Verso Books.

Haug, F. (2009). *The "Four-in-One Perspective": A Manifesto for a More Just Life, Socialism and Democracy*, 23:1, 119-123, DOI: 10.1080/08854300802635932

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	Avila, M. (2022). Designing for Interdependence: A Poetics of Relating. Bloomsbury Publishing.
Supplementary Readings	

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Design Research related to project 3
Course Code	96103B
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	English
Lecturers	Prof. Sónia Amélia Cabral Matos, Sonia.CabralMatos@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/48172
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	6
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	60
Lab Hours	140
Individual Study Hours	140
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	The Design Research module introduces students to an expanding research landscape regarding contemporary discourses and debates surrounding qualitative approaches to research and the underlying research methods and techniques. Classes include lectures, readings circles, and discussion groups that help students explore case studies and research projects relevant to eco-social design. Topics include 'power, reciprocity and positionality' in research, 'vulnerability, ethics & consent', 'humanising research', 'reflexivity' and 'research, transformation & empowerment'. The module also opens space for the creation of new and inventive research approaches grounded in design as both discourse and practice.
Course Topics	Action-Oriented Research Positionality and Reflexivity

	Vulnerability and Ethics
Teaching Format	- Lectures, presentations, workshops - Weekly check-in sessions - 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)
Required Readings	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 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 Santos, B. de S. (2016) Epistemologies of the South¿: justice against epistemicide. [Online]. London: Routledge. Schön, 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.
Supplementary Readings	