DESIGN RESEARCH INCUBATION

Reflections on a research project about doing and supervising design research

By
Gwendolyn Kulick
Michael Hohl
Judith Dobler

Cairo & Dessau / 2024

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Dessau / 2 – 10 June 2023
Cairo / 29 September – 5 October 2023

“Hard sciences are successful because they deal with the soft problems; soft sciences are struggling because they deal with the hard problems.”

Heinz von Foerster

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“Some things, it’s very useful to begin without fully knowing where you are going.”

*Kae Tempest**

* The name of the artist was Kate until she changed it to Kae in 2020.

WHY AN INCUBATOR FOR DESIGN RESEARCH?

When the call for proposals for the DAAD-BMBF Mobility Grant 2023 was circulated in fall 2022, a discussion that happened earlier that year during the biennial conference of the Design Research Society in Bilbao came to our mind. Design researchers, supervisors, and teachers pondered the positive impact in terms of motivation, inspiration, and knowledge gained from such events, where they share and discuss projects and ideas, finalised outcomes as well as work-in progress, with peers from around the world.

Many of these lecturers and senior researchers supervise junior researchers and think that opportunities for exchange between young researchers in the field of design are rare. Still, they would be very beneficial for them. Another shared experience turned out to be that students, supervisors, and colleagues at our respective institutions often need to clarify their different views on the nature of design research in relation to research in other disciplines and relation to design practice.

Students face challenges, especially when writing proposals when applying to a master’s program, when discussing their research methodology with more than one supervisor, or presenting to external jury members.

Those were the points of departure for writing the proposal of ‘A transcultural design research incubator’ for the DAAD-BMBF Mobility Grant. While Gwendolyn Kulick and Michael Hohl were at the DRS conference, Judith Dobler had already been working with both of them at the Design Department of Anhalt University of Applied Sciences and as a lecturer at the Berlin Campus of the German University in Cairo where she teaches design theory.

Our objectives were twofold when we conceived the proposal ‘A transcultural design research incubator’.
Firstly, we aimed to foster an exchange between different perspectives on design research regarding regional and disciplinary contexts. Both universities have quite already diverse student and teacher bodies. At the GUC, design students in product, graphic and media design from different demographic backgrounds and from different parts of Egypt and the wider MENA region, are taught by faculty members from different countries and disciplinary backgrounds during their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. At Anhalt University, with three master’s programs in design, two of them in English language, students from all around the world conduct design research in a disciplinary, integrated way. Moreover, Anhalt University, over the past two years, has begun to establish the ‘Research Centre for Doctoral Studies in Architecture and Design’. While both institutions are already places for debate, we consider it beneficial to add a stronger discourse on the nature of design research, because we experienced an insecurity about it among students and colleagues that also impacts the students’ research processes. Further, we realised the importance of contextualising design research. Research methods might be applied differently in different cultural, geographical or socio-economic contexts, and interpreting findings also requires a contextual lens. Our second objective was to have theoretical findings and to involve master students of the GUC and Anhalt University in this exchange during feedback sessions for their design research projects. Within this grant’s scope, six GUC students could participate in discussions with peers in Dessau. Vice versa, students from Dessau could unfortunately not visit Cairo due to budget constraints, but if opportunities arise to continue this project, they might be able to.

Finally a few words about the title of the project, and why it was slightly changed for this publication, when we removed the term ‘transcultural’ because we realised that in a way all universities today are home to students and faculty members of diverse cultural backgrounds. Such diverse scenarios are common, and our main focus was not on analysing different cultural approaches to design research. Rather, we see the awareness of contextual conditions as an important aspect of any research. Instead we focused on the experiences of young design researchers and on how to support them in a meaningful way in their research endeavours. As such, we focused on the design research incubator more than the explicitly transcultural aspects. The term ‘incubator’ we borrowed from the field of medical technology, where it describes an apparatus that maintains comfortable conditions for premature babies or even microorganisms to grow, and from the field of business, where it describes an environment that provides equipment and support staff to small businesses (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In the title of this booklet, we then used the term ‘incubation’ which signalises an ongoing process more than only a location.
During the research project, we explored what kind of input design master students might need from supervisors and how those can provide input besides feedback on project ideas and research steps. The exercises during the workshop week in Dessau focused on reflection: Where do I stand? How clear am I about my project? Can I explain what concerns me in simple words? How do I visualise my project or aspects of it? How do I relate theoretical and practical research?

Our observations and insights prompted us to develop a course book of sorts. It consists of five modules in which we compile useful sources for supervising design research. These sources include thoughts in the form of small texts, concepts, tools, and speculative course descriptions. They aim to support critical reflection during the design research process and provide practical guidance for completing a design research project.

We view this booklet as a loose compilation of material without claiming to be complete. Rather, we hope that it serves as a starting point to continue this project about design research supervision and as an invitation for interested design researchers and supervisors to engage in this project with us, maybe through a digital open-source platform or further collabrative research visits.

“To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.”

Bell Hooks

COURSE BOOK AS SOURCE BOOK

A CRITICAL AND SPECULATIVE COMPILATION OF IDEAS, CONCEPTS AND TOOLS TO SUPPORT DESIGN RESEARCHERS

During our research project, we were also involved in supervising design research. Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Dessau offers three master’s programs in design. One is the Master of Arts in Integrated Design (MAID), and the secons is the more cultural history oriented Master of Sciences COOP Design Research in cooperation with the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and Humboldt University in Berlin. Both are conducted in English, while the third Master of Arts in Intermedial Design is conducted in German. Anhalt University also has specialised research centres such as the Centre for Doctoral Studies in Architecture and Design, and the Materiability Lab. Most master’s students in Dessau pursue their postgraduate studies as full-time students. At the German University in Cairo, students mainly pursue their Master of Sciences in Design individually under supervision by one of the faculty members of the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts. Prior, they complete the so-called premaster year, consisting of semesters nine and ten of their bachelor studies, during which they complete studio and theory courses. They share those with all students of their batch, who complete these two semesters in order to achieve

their bachelor's degree. At the GUC most master's students are teaching assistants and work part-time on their master projects. Despite the differing formats and conditions of the master programs at Anhalt University in Dessau and the GUC in Cairo, we, as supervisors of young design researchers, found that our experiences overlap. Thematic areas or phases in which design researchers and supervisors face challenges or feel that circumstances have changed because design concerns also change over time and do not differ very much.
Therefore we defined five modules, which take the style of speculative course folders. They are not finalised course descriptions with defined learning outcomes, readings, tools and other materials but aim to provide food for thought for engaging conceptually and practically with a design research project during different phases.

The following five modules we extracted from our discussions:

1. Design research as ethical position: How to identify your values, mindset and principles
2. Design research as expedition: How to immerse yourself into an unknown voyage
3. Design research as knowledge circulation: How to structure, express and communicate your research in a thesis
4. Design research as context: How to embrace diverse circumstances in your research
5. Design research as supervision: How to be accompanied in your design research process

We document our research visits to Dessau and Cairo on the pages between the five modules. Many of the ideas conveyed in the modules emerged during these research stays during conversations with the master students, who participated in this research project. They made us realise that our initially anticipated goal to formulate guidelines for supervising design research was probably not the most helpful outcome.

These modules are starting point for collecting a larger pool of helpful design research and supervision material and as a

starting point for a broader discourse on design research, in relation to design practice as well as to research in other disciplines. What are the nature and the scope of design research projects? How do they differ from the research that is inherent to every design project regarding users, target groups, market surveys, resources and the like? What implications do such differences have on methodological approaches? How can we debate and explore design research with students who are just embarking on this journey?

The following modules are a speculative course book because some of the provided input might hopefully help to enrich the environment and processes of constructively conducting and supervising design research. As such, in the five modules we speculate about different aspects of how to foster design research conceptually and practically.

Lastly, we also see our speculative course book as just a tiny beginning and as an invitation for others to contribute ideas and material, and to join discourse and practical experimentation in the field of supervising academic design research at a university level.

“In design, evaluating the given facts, finding and formulating relevant questions, framing the project and devising a process towards its completion are core competencies for future design professionals, so throughout the educational process it is important to give the students the space and trust to find their own voice as a designer.”

Julia Lohmann

DESIGN RESEARCH AS ETHICAL POSITION

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR VALUES, MINDSET AND PRINCIPLES

Designerly making, thinking and reflecting often are informed by practicality, ingenuity, empathy, appropriateness, usability, and practical skills learned during an undergraduate degree at university. Students experience
– the transmission of knowledge about a phenomenon of study
– a training in the appropriate methods of enquiry
– an initiation into the belief systems and values of the culture
(Cross, 2006)

As an emerging academic design researcher, new elements are introduced or emphasised: Among those ethics, accuracy, critical and reflective thinking, being thorough even meticulous and exhaustive, documenting well, questioning deeply, in all those being rigorous and honest.
Designerly conviction and enthusiasm about the final outcome of a design process collide here, with the stance of a sceptical academic researcher. As a researchers, we are aware of flaws in our theories and assumptions – while as a designers, we wish to trust that our designs work as expected. Here, the ‘Mindset of a Researcher’ (Fig.1) and ‘Key Competencies for Sustainability’ (Fig. 2) come into play.

They invite the reflective practitioner and academic researcher to apply critical thinking, systems thinking, self-awareness, and among others to learn to live with ambiguity, think openly and flexibly, be humble, think analytically, and be tolerant and respectful towards others. This openness to the unexpected and learning creates an awareness of one's stance and perspective, becoming aware of one's mindset and posture.

POSTURE & MINDSET

Terry Irwin et.al. (2015) argue, "Living in and through transitional times requires a mindset and posture of openness, mindfulness, self-reflection, a willingness to collaborate, and 'optimistic grumpiness'." As designers, we might be experts, but at the same time, we are becoming learners again. We might be wrong, and we might make errors. Our perspective is one among many different perspectives.

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS: EFFICIENCY VS. EFFECTIVENESS

In second-order cybernetics we know that perfect 'objectivity' is impossible. The observer is always viewed as becoming part of the system she is observing. She necessarily has a particular perspective. There is no objective reality 'out there', but only the different perspectives of different observers. This particular perspective implies that other people might see different things than we do and that we might misunderstand. Such a constructivist perspective also influences the design and research process.
Is it really necessary? Is it ecologically sustainable? If many people use it, how might it influence the social sphere?

Related to this is Russell Ackoff's explanation of the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. He argues that "Efficiency is a measure of how well resources are used to achieve ends; it is value-free. Effectiveness is efficiency weighted by the values of the ends achieved; it is value-full." He cites Peter Drucker, "The righter you do the wrong thing, the wronger you become."
As reflective practitioners and researchers we must consider our own values, posture and mindset, as they affect our expectations, theories, interpretations and perceptions.

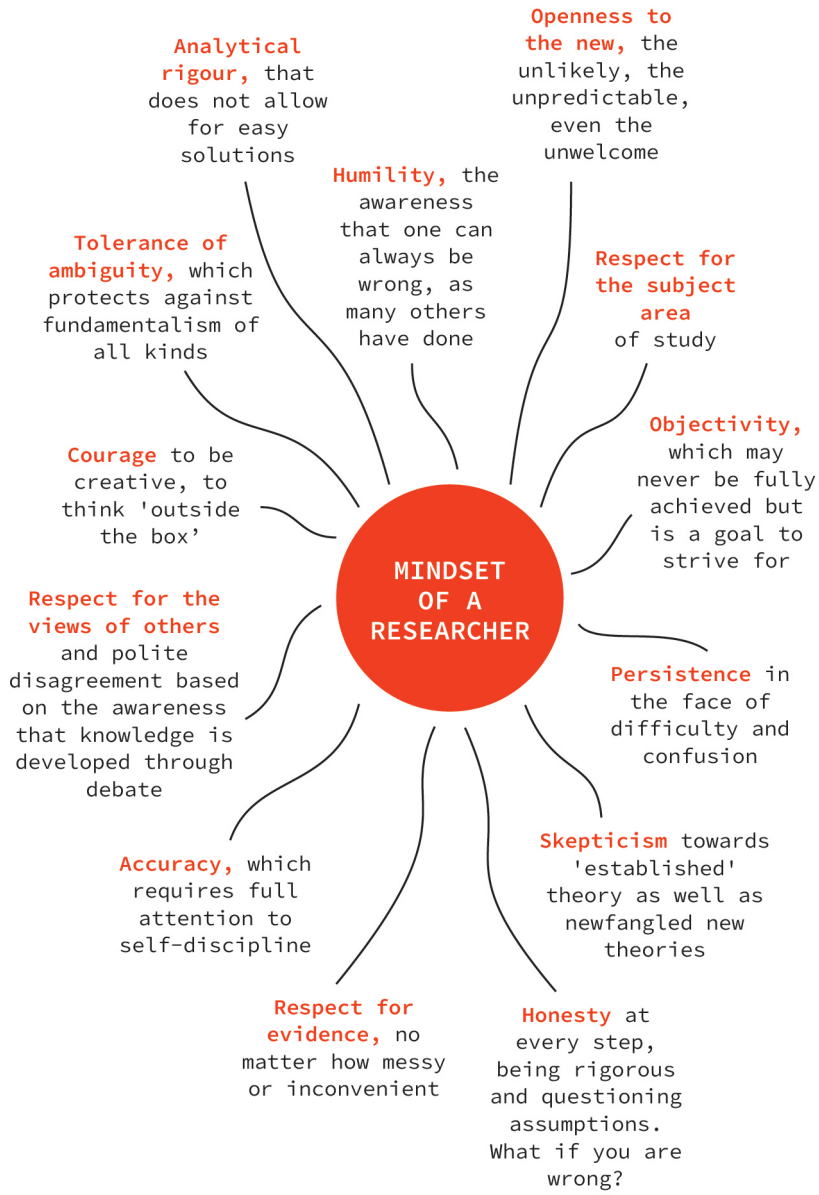

Fig. 1: Adapted from Zerf, Huber, BAK (1970). Forschendes Lernen.

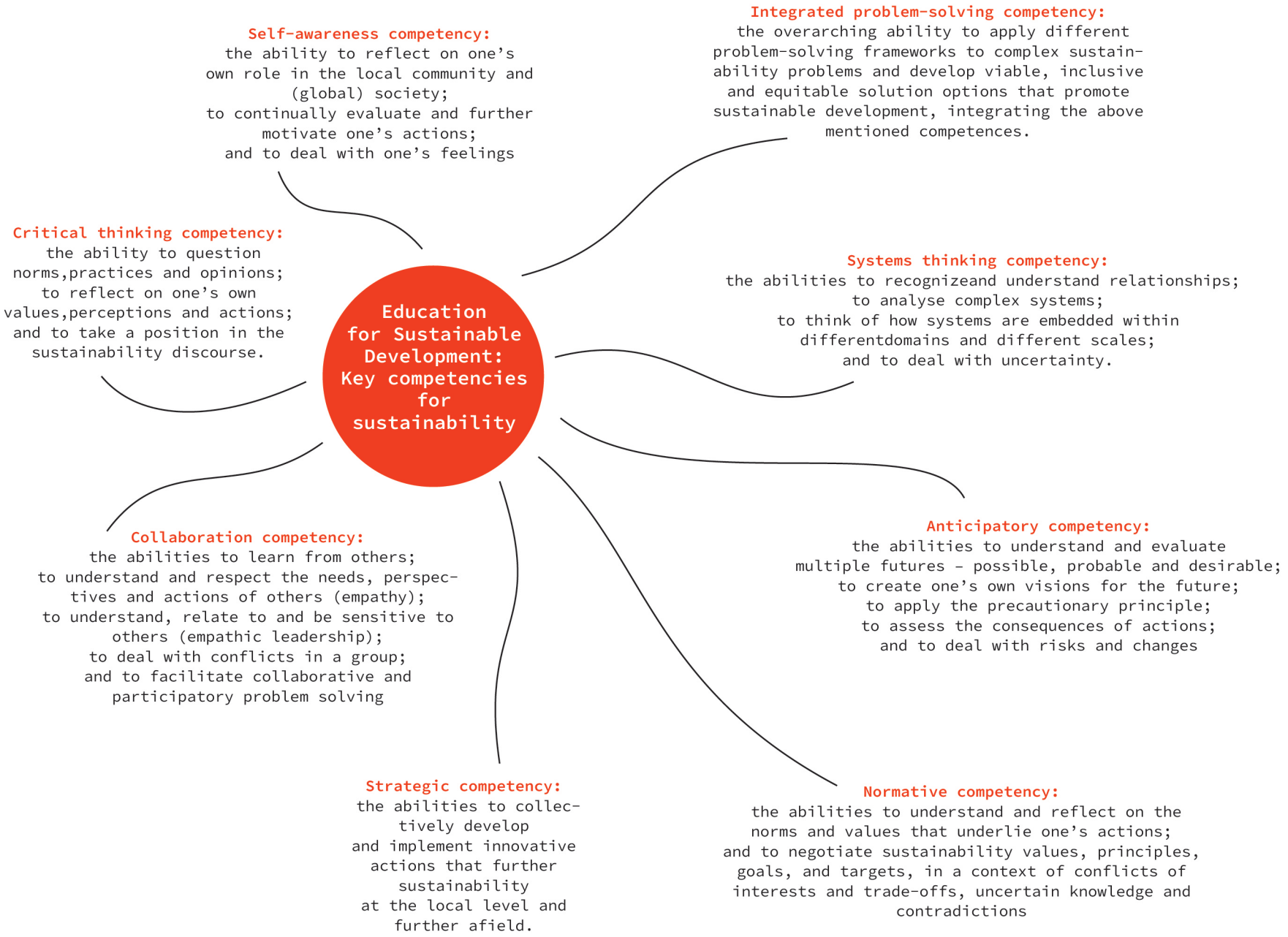

Fig. 2: Adapted from Rieckmann, M. (2017). Learning to transform the world: key competencies in education for sustainable development. UNESCO Publishing. p.10.

The challenge of practice-based design theory and discussion

It is critical to understand that design research discussions intend to engage with practice on a reflective basis. We aim to engage with practice and theory on the same level as theoretical knowledge is interwoven into all practices. The knowledge of practices is what we want to foster within academic institutions of education and research, such as design schools and universities.
We want to ensure that the conversations serve as reports and stories from the multitude of domains and communities that we all represent – and that we do not have only 'meta' discussions about what critique or research should be, and that we reflect this idea into our most familiar practices.

GATHERINGS*

The gathering provides an inclusive space for different perspectives on design research. It is a forum to inspire, expand, and challenge how we approach practice and theory in design research. The gathering takes advantage of all participants' varied and diverse backgrounds: experienced and novice members, guests, and students. Discussions can focus on written papers, essays, practical projects, performances, or exercises.

*In academic research the format of the gathering was formerly known as colloquium. Attending a gathering is essential for exchange and critical reflection among fellow researchers during research qualification. Many types and procedures are depending on the academic institution and people. A design research institution publishing its guidelines and on which our rules of engagement are inspired from: https://criticalmedialab.ch/colloquium/ [1.10.2023].

Rules of Engagement

The gathering is a space where teaching, learning, and research intersect. We invite all references and insights from all parts of lived experience. People with diverse backgrounds and experience levels can participate in the gathering.

Respectful disagreement should be generous towards all present.

We use straightforward language to make the forum accessible to everyone. We should never assume that other people know what we know: no name-dropping, and please refrain from unsubstantiated references to unexplained arguments. If jargon is necessary, an explanation of the meaning should come with it.

English is the language of communication. Comments, questions, and others are welcome in the language the participants feel comfortable with. Experienced members will help with translation. In case of specific accessibility needs, the organisers will find solutions.

In gatherings, we treat everyone respectfully (in presence and online) and create a welcoming environment. Everyone ensures that their behaviour meets these standards.

We are empathetic to others' vulnerabilities and avoid violence through words or images. If potentially disturbing material needs to be shared with the audience, please discuss the issue with the experienced members and organisers.

Further Reading

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DESIGN RESEARCH AS EXPEDITION

HOW TO IMMERSE YOURSELF INTO AN UNKNOWN VOYAGE

When discussing their project, most prospective design researchers, for example, master students, already have their research result in mind: a product, a campaign, a book, maybe guidelines with design standards or, very often, ‘an app’. None of these outcomes would per se be false or inappropriate as a design research result. Yet such predictions represent a widespread and perhaps unintentional misunderstanding: the assumption that at the beginning of a design research project, we can already know what kind of design solution we can offer as a research result.

Does this sound a bit absurd? If not, the reader can stop here.
For those who disagree, the thoughts and resources provided on the following pages might provide fruitful input for supervising and conducting design research. They were put together after discussions among those of us, who supervise design research, and while working with the master students who participated in the design research incubator. So, why do design researchers, often subconsciously believe that they can predict the result of their research?
When designers begin to research, they usually have little prior experience in academic research. It is a new endeavour. As applied arts practitioners, they are experienced in collecting information about customers, users, materials, and market conditions in a rather

pragmatic way, in order to complete a project, whose nature is often predefined to some extent, for example by a client.
However design research differs. Research concerns and questions can be of abstract, philosophical, or conceptual nature, and they are then explored through a process in which practical experimentation and theoretical input cross-fertilise each other through critical reflection.
Design research can be conducted about design, for example, when investigating historical topics or contemporary case studies and movements. It can also be conducted for design, e.g., by developing new materials, methods, or strategies. But when design research is conducted through design, or in other words is practice- led, the practical design work is a research method that helps to answer the research question or concern in relation to theoretical debates (Findeli, 2008).
Results can be but do not have to be finalised design projects. They include tangible designs, yes, but maybe more so critical analyses of practical experiments and visionary and speculative concepts and frameworks. These can serve as exciting design research results if they encourage and guide different design practices.

With this in mind, we can also dismantle the idea that design researchers must solve problems. Usually put into young design practitioners' minds at the beginning of their studies, this problem-solving mantra might no longer hold for design practice, but that is another discussion. Here we analyse why design researchers tend to know their research results before they start their research. The problem-solving mantra suggests that a design research project is unsuccessful if it does not result in a problem solution, or does not verify or falsify a hypothesis. In our observation, this is another misunderstanding that causes insecurity among young design researchers who, therefore, tend to formulate a research result already in their research proposal. They fear being labelled 'unclear' or 'lost'.
However we would like to encourage them to trust the process and embrace an open-ended journey, even if it feels insecure and disorienting. This journey means to cherishing and including serendipitous data – information discovered while searching for

something else. Such detours might change the research direction, but they do not derail the entire design research project; rather, they guide the researcher towards new insights.
Another aspect is that practice-led design research involves experimentation, and experimentation, which involves failed and successful results. Both are of equal value for design research. Failure might be frustrating, but there is so much to learn from failed experiments. They are part of the journey. Embracing these hurdles with curiosity, genuine interest, and the ability to make sense of the process and to communicate this sense is the needed quality in design research.

Therefore, we want to encourage young design researchers to embark on their research projects as if they were expeditions: with an interest or a question, but the courage to embark on scary beginnings and continue on bumpy tracks that provide unexpected events and surface surprising information. As such, they provide the opportunity to develop something novel, that opens up more paths and raises more questions.

Fig. 3: Developed by the authors during the research project.

“Being caught in between, being a bit lost, is good for a human being. Things have their own time, and we should learn to enjoy this, rather than imposing own, usually rushed time.”

Ranulph Glanville

Rigour in Research*

Doctoral research is expected to be exceptionally rigorous. What does this rigour imply for the researcher? Adopted from research in the sciences, the significant terms associated with rigour, and associated with PhD research, were that the research had to be “thorough, exhaustive, accurate, and systematic.” In art and design critical and reflective elements were often added as well. In our seminars, it emerged that “thorough” and “exhaustive” were related and could be described as together forming a “T”-shape: the horizontal line of the “T” consisting of an exhaustive, broad and comprehensive overview of what is considered the context of research and related practice, while the focus area, the vertical element of the “T,” consisting of going deep into a particular theme and being thorough in one’s contribution. When we examine the next term, “accurate,” meaning “correct in all details” or “faithful representation,” we realise that Ranulph Glanville’s demand for honesty in research is going beyond mere accuracy. He demanded that the whole research should be imbued with a stance of honesty, meaning not only not inventing facts, but questioning the accuracy of every fact, step and insight, that emerged. In conclusion we might say that doctoral research in art, design, and architecture has to be ‘critical, reflective, thorough, exhaustive, accurate, systematic and honest’.

* This text contains passages published earlier by: Hohl, M. (2016). Rigor in research, honesty and values. Constructivist Foundations, 11(3).

A tentative design research syllabus (part 1)

Course Title	**Critical thinking in design research**
Course Description	This course aims to introduce students to design research and its various methodologies. In the course, students develop practical and theoretical competencies in critical thinking through the lens of design research. Students will explore the intersection of imagination, storytelling, critical questioning of research positions, and pluriversal knowledge and practices. Through theoretical discussions, practical exercises, and project-based learning, students will develop competencies in speculation, imagination, storytelling, and pluriversal knowledge and practices. The course will encourage students to think critically, explore alternative perspectives, and engage in creative problem-solving.
Course objectives and learning outcomes	By the end of this course, students will be able to: – To understand the fundamental concepts and theories of design research. – To learn critical thinking skills to analyse and evaluate research positions. – To develop practical and theoretical competencies in design research. – To apply skills in imagination to generate innovative design ideas. – To explore the power of storytelling in communicating design narratives. – To cultivate pluriversal knowledge practices by embracing diverse cultural perspectives. – To engage in pluriversal knowledge practices to challenge dominant narratives. – To apply design research methodologies to real-world design challenges.
Competencies covered (professional, methodological, social)	Critique involves a rigorous examination of a study's strengths, weaknesses, and implications. It aims to provide constructive feedback and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in design research. By engaging in critical analysis and evaluation, critique fosters intellectual growth, encourages innovation, and promotes a deeper understanding of design principles, methodologies, and their implications in real-world contexts. Exploration: Students will learn to think beyond the conventional boundaries of design, exploring alternative possibilities and envisioning future scenarios. They will develop critical thinking skills and apply them to their design projects. Imagination: Students tap into their creative potential and develop imaginative thinking. They will learn techniques of imagination and apply them to generate design solutions. Storytelling: Students will understand the power of storytelling in design research. They will learn how to craft compelling narratives that communicate design

	concepts effectively. Through storytelling, students can engage and connect with their audience on an emotional level. Pluriversal Knowledge and practices: Students will explore diverse cultural perspectives and challenge the dominant design narratives. They will learn to appreciate and incorporate different worldviews, fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in their design research.
Course Outline	*Pluriversal knowledge and practices* Engaging with diverse perspectives and knowledge systems; Challenging dominant narratives through pluriversal approaches; Examining the implications of pluriversal knowledge in research; Exploring diverse cultural perspectives in design research; Incorporating inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in design projects. *Practical and Theoretical Competences in Design Research* Understanding the principles and techniques of design research; Developing practical skills in design research; Practical application of research methodologies; Conducting design research projects with a focus on speculation, imagination, storytelling, and pluriversal knowledge and practices; Integrating theoretical knowledge into research projects; Presenting and communicating research findings effectively; Applying design methodologies to complex problems; · Critically evaluating the effectiveness of design research approaches.
Project Presentations and Critiques	Class participation and engagement in discussions; individual and group projects applying design methodologies; critical analysis essays on research positions and paradigms; presentation of research findings and reflections on the process; Presentation and discussion of design research projects; receiving feedback and engaging in critical discussions.
Note	This tentative syllabus can be adapted and modified based on the students' and instructor's needs and interests.

MODULE 2
: DESIGN RESEARCH AS EXPEDITION

Further Reading

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DESSAU / 2 – 10 JUNE 2023

CAIRO / 29 SEPTEMBER – 5 OCTOBER 2023

DOCUMENTATION OF RESEARCH EXCHANGE

RESEARCH TRIP TO DESSAU – DIARY

DAY 1 / FRIDAY / 2 JUNE 2023

Arrival in Dessau

Five GUC / FASA master students – Aly El Din Hazem Sakr, Gorgena Kila, Nadine Garir, Nourhan Mansour Elewa and Omar Abdelrehim – travel together with Gwendolyn Kulick from Cairo to Dessau. They are greeted by Dr. Michael Hohl who shows them the guest apartment. Gwendolyn Kulick checks into the Bauhaus Foundation guest room.

DAY 2 / SATURDAY / 3 JUNE 2023

Visit to Futurium in Berlin

Gorgena, Nadine, Nourhan and Omar visited the Futurium in Berlin together with Gwendolyn Kulick.
The Futurium is a museum dedicated to the question 'How do we want to live?' Visitors can explore future life in three thematic areas: human, nature and technology.
Alyeldin attended the 'Indie Game Fest' in Cologne, an event related to the topic of his master project about game design, where he was able to receive feedback to his work from experts in the field.

DAY 3 / SUNDAY / 4 JUNE 2023

Day off

DAY 4 / MONDAY / 5 JUNE 2023

Workshop

Morning
Welcome, introduction of participants and project presentations at the 'Research Centre for Doctoral Studies in Architecture and Design'

Participants from the GUC

Aly El Din Hazem Sakr, Gorgena Kila, Nadine Garir, Nourhan Mansour Emam and Omar Abdelrehim from the GUC in Cairo and Salma Borhan, TA at the GIU Berlin Campus

Participants from Dessau

Maria Maciejko, Tariq Mansi, Alejandro Muñoz and Deepesh Haubola from the program 'Masters in Integrated Design' (MAID)

Project presentations

Nourhan: Agricultural waste in Egypt
Nadine: Immersive media and traditianl puppetry (Al Hanouz) in Egypt
Maria: The implementation of user experience practices into fashion design process
Salma: First aid response at traffic accident sites in Cairo
Tariq: Bridging the divide between schools and children's creativity
Alejandro: ADHD therapy for children and the role of design

Afternoon

The Cairo participants attended the lecture MA Design Theory by Prof. Michael Hohl.

Evening

Picnic at the so-called 'pool', a wooden platform between the university's different buildings.

DAY 5 / TUESDAY / 6 JUNE 2023

Workshop

Morning

Nourhan attended the seminar 'Material Basics' by Virginia Linsch at the Materiability Lab of Anhalt University.

Project presentations

Gorgena: Living with plastic waste in Egypt
Aly El Din: Visual polish and game feel in game design
Omar: National team sports apparel in Egypt

Afternoon

Presentations about design research at HS Anhalt:
- Dr Michael Hohl introduces the Research Centre for Doctoral Studies in Architecture and Design.
- Karsten Schuhl introduces the Materiability Lab.
- Alberto Iberburen introduces is PhD topic about mindfulness and creativity in design education.

DAY 6 / WEDNESDAY / 7 JUNE 2023

Workshop

Morning

Reflection, feedback and discussion with Gwendolyn Kulick, Dr. Judith Dobler, and as a guest Dr. Sandra Giegler.

Poster Workshop

GUC master students create a poster each of their master project, telling a story in 60 seconds a) of its present status quo, and b) of the future when it is completed.

Afternoon

Visiting the Bauhaus Museum in Dessau

Evening

Cooking and dinner at VorOrt Haus

DAY 7 / THURSDAY / 8 JUNE 2023

Workshop

Morning

Feedback and discussion on relating access to data and design research methods

Afternoon

Project presentations by five MAID students, supervised by Dr. Sandra Giegler

Moazzam: Convenient transition for international students in Germany
Swapnil: Training for intellectually disabled through mixed reality technology

Salman: Emotional metamorphosis – Design for well-being of international students
Shruti: Connecting students in a new unknown city
Raja: How to make the campus more sustainable
Vishaal: Mitigating edible excess food from restaurants: A perennial challenge of metropolitan cities in India

DAY 8 / FRIDAY / 9 JUNE 2023

Workshop finalisation & Bauhaus heritage tour

Morning

Documentation of the week
GUC participants write reflections

Afternoon

Guided tour through the Bauhaus Building and the Master Houses in Dessau

DAY 9 / SATURDAY / 10 JUNE 2023

Departure from Dessau

Beginner
MSc project
OMAR ABDELREHIM
REPRESENTING EGYPTIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH SPORTSWEAR
MSc.
PRESENT
FUTURE
SALMA BAHAA
STORY
2023
Present
2026
Future
-We have alot of agri. waste in Egypt.
Tomatoes, pepper, eggplant, Sesame, & potatoes. produce alot of waste after crop harvesting - Stalk, Stem, leaves, roots
-Other crop residues have been utilized already in the design Industry.
-I want to make a use of such crop wastes, even make them replace already existing materials.
-I want them to be used in our design process, to begin of the material options.
product Designers, doesn't know alot of the innovated materials. (Not accessible)
VERY FEW Applications
Alot of material Testings.
Alot of innovated materials, that we don't see in the market.
-There are alot of Crop wastes in the Agri. Industry in Egypt, Although there are alot of materials being created using these wastes.
But with very few applications
-Most of them are recommended & aren't being actively used for product/Solution manufacturing
due to several reasons
-That's why the waste Quantity is still there be. It is not utilized yet.
COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

FUTURE

Practice:
I get my ideas through making, the material, and the constraints. My conceptual ideas would be very different without that knowledge and hands-on experience.

Rules of Engagement
1) Respectful disagreement should never be reprobative, but ameliorative and generous towards all present.
2) Although shaped as a substantiated academic forum, we invite all references and insights from all parts of lived experience: philosophy to pop culture, literature to online media.
3) Keeping in mind 2) — do not assume that other people know what you know (i.e.: No name dropping, and please refrain from unsubstantiated reference to unexplained arguments).

MATERIABILITY
RESEARCH GROUP

MINDFULNESS FOR DESIGNERS
An Integration of Mindfulness, Design Education and Reflective Practices
Prof. Dr Michael Hohl

RESEARCH TRIP TO CAIRO – DIARY

DAY 1 / FRIDAY / 29 SEPTEMBER 2023
Arrival in Cairo

Evening
Dr. Michael Hohl and Dr. Judith Dobler arrive in Cairo and are greeted by Gwendolyn Kulick at the airport

DAY 2 / SATURDAY / 30 SEPTEMBER 2023
Sightseeing & work preparation

Morning
Visit to the Pyramids of Gizeh

Afternoon
Preparation of presentations for the following day

DAY 3 / SUNDAY / 1 OCTOBER 2023
Work at the GUC Campus

Morning
Meeting with faculty members to exchange information about research structures and design research programs at Anhalt University and at the German University in Cairo

Afternoon
Master students who visited Dessau in spring present the progress of their research projects

DAY 4 / MONDAY / 2 OCTOBER 2023
Work on project related publication

Morning & Afternoon
Concept development and content generation

DAY 5 / TUESDAY / 3 OCTOBER 2023
Work on project related publication

Morning
Visit to IFAO printing press

Afternoon
Concept development and content generation

Evening
Felucca outing with master students

DAY 6 / WEDNESDAY / 4 OCTOBER 2023
Work on project related publication

Moning & Afternoon
Concept development and content generation

Evening
Get together with some Applied Arts colleagues

DAY 7 / THURSDAY / 5 OCTOBER 2023
Departure from Cairo

MODULE 3

DESIGN RESEARCH AS KNOWLEDGE CIRCULATION

HOW TO STRUCTURE, EXPRESS AND COMMUNICATE YOUR RESEARCH IN A THESIS

Design researchers, especially new ones, often conduct their research with much consideration. They define a research methodology, collect data accordingly, and try to make sense of their insights.

They experience the highs – when making interesting discoveries – and lows – when being lost and confronted with more questions than answers – like many other researchers.

Writing a thesis about their research process and results, is challenging for most design researchers. Structuring and writing texts has usually not been at the core of their previous studies. Unlike students and professionals of other disciplines designers do not usually write much apart from project presentations and documentation. They are not used to it.

Written communication skills are important when conducting and communicating design research projects, .

We think it would be beneficial to design a course that focuses mainly on academic writing skills for designers, including developing competence in using up-to-date digital tools.

A tentative design research syllabus (part 2)

Course Title	**Reflective writing and communication**
Course Description	This course aims to develop practical knowledge and insights in reflective writing and communication. Students will learn to apply the four main aims of language usage: correctness, clarity, engagement, and delivery. Additionally, students will learn standard rules of academic writing, language styles, and citation formats. The course emphasises using English as a standard writing and research language. As English is often not the native language for many students, the course will also focus on utilising digital tools for writing, such as reference management systems and artificial intelligence.
Course objectives and learning outcomes	By the end of this course, students will be able to: – Develop practical competence in reflective writing and communication as well as theoretical competence in understanding the principles and concepts of reflective writing. – Produce written work that is clear and easily understandable for the reader. – Engage readers through the use of writing techniques and strategies. – Create a final impression on the reader that aligns with the intended message. – Apply standard rules of academic writing, including language and citation styles. – Utilize digital tools, such as reference management systems (e.g., Zotero, Citavi) and artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, and others), to enhance their writing process. – Demonstrate proficiency in using correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation in their writing.
Course Outline	<u>Introduction to reflective writing</u> Understanding the importance of reflective writing in various contexts; Exploring the four main aims of language usage: correctness, clarity, engagement, and delivery; Overview of standard rules of academic writing. <u>Language and style in reflective writing</u> Developing clarity in writing: sentence structure, paragraph organization, and logical flow; Enhancing engagement through the use of language techniques; Examining different writing styles and their appropriateness in reflective writing. <u>Citation and referencing</u> Introduction to citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA) and their application in academic writing; Using reference management systems (e.g., Zotero, Citavi) to organize and cite sources efwfectively. <u>Digital tools for writing</u> Exploring the role of artificial intelligence in writing and communication; Utilizing AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Forefront) to enhance writing productivity and quality. <u>Practical application and feedback</u> Applying the learned principles and techniques in practical writing assignments; Receiving feedback on written work to improve reflective writing skills.

“The conventional way of writing even forbids the use of the first person … The standards and formal classifications that pervade [academic writing] always represent treaties between conflicting passions and desires, yet what could look more innocuous or boring?”

Susan Leigh Star

Assessment methods	Writing exercises: Reflective essays, protocols, proposals, storytelling Quizzes and tests: Assessing understanding of language usage, citation styles, and digital tools Class participation: Active engagement in discussions and peer feedback sessions
Required textbooks	Murray, Rowena & Moore, Sarah (2006). *The handbook of academic writing. A fresh approach.* Open University Press. Murray, Rowena (2011). *How to write a thesis.* Open University Press. Eco, Umberto (2015 [1977]). *How to write a thesis*. MIT Press.
Note	This syllabus is a tentative and can be adapted and modified based on the students’ and instructor’s needs and interests.

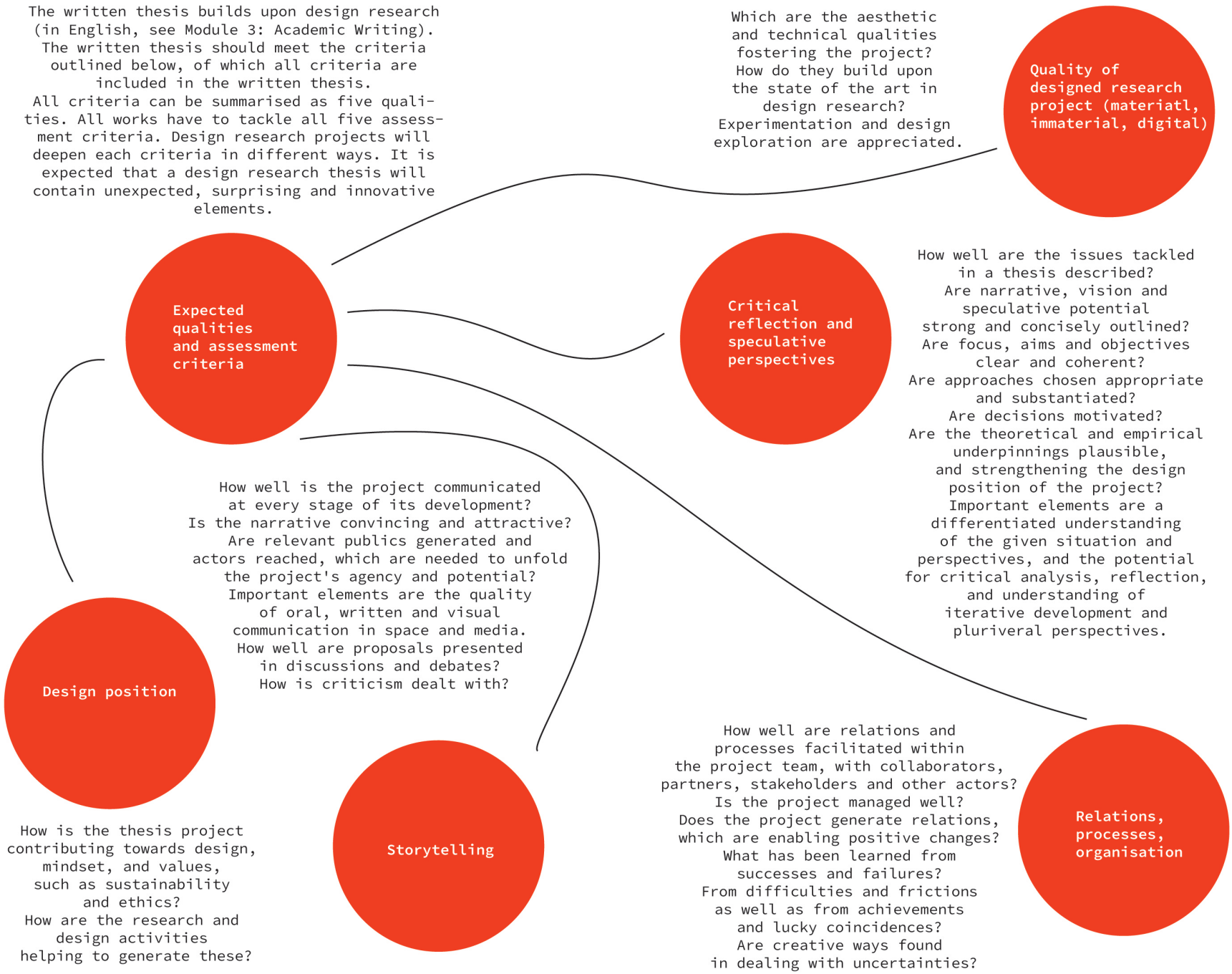

Fig. 4: Adapted from: Thesis guidelines, Master Eco-Social Design, University Bolzano, Italy.

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DESIGN RESEARCH AS CONTEXT

HOW TO EMBRACE DIVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES IN YOUR RESEARCH

It is vital to acknowledge the specific context of most topics that design researchers are concerned with. Why? What does context mean when defining a thematic research focus or deciding and implementing a research methodology and process? And how does a specific geographical, cultural, or economic context impact how we draw conclusions regarding a meaningful research result?

Context

a: the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood.

b: the parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2023

Such definitions, especially the first one, allow for some reflections on the role of context in design research.

Firstly, topics chosen by design researchers from different parts of the world show similarities, especially those impacted by larger global concerns, such as the field of waste and topics such as waste reduction, management, circularity or material sciences. Others include the interest in supporting cultural heritage preservation through contemporary design strategies and the use of new media, the diversification, strengthening and representation of local cultures, or questions of formal and functional design approaches. What they have in common is that they appear quite universal at first sight, but once investigating them further, the need to consider different geographical, cultural, socio-economic, and also technological conditions becomes vital. Recycling strategies for example function differently in different places: in Cairo the recycling industry relies mainly on human labour in a neighbourhood dedicated to it, whereas in many other countries recycling happens through technological solutions. Similar topics focusing on public education, such as regarding first aid, must take into account that some countries have higher illiteracy rates than in others. Geographical and demographical conditions may have an impact on transport and mobility-related topics, and a preference for busy, colourful aesthetics in one place might be considered confusing or cheap in another. As such, almost all design research topics include elements that cannot easily be transferred from one context to another. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the context when proposing a topic.

Secondly, the research process is often impacted by contextual conditions. When defining a research methodology, it is important to consider cultural customs. For example some of the master students faced outright rejection from their research participants when they confronted them with written consent agreements. In the Egyptian context, people seem less comfortable with signing consent, while on the other hand, when they were just asked orally they usually were less concerned. Similarly people are differently comfortable with being recorded not only in different cultural environments but also in different groups of people within one society, irrespective of whether the topic touches upon sensitive information or not. Accessibility to field research locations also appears to be more difficult in some contexts than others, and aspects of practical arrangements for research activities, including travel, differ. Participatory research approaches are easier in environments where there are little power imbalances between researchers and research participants, for example, in settings where the researcher and the participants come from similar socio-economic backgrounds. However, this balance is challenging to maintain when the design researcher collaborates with people in disadvantaged communities.

Thirdly, also the second definition of the word ‘context’ also deserves a mention. While it refers to the context of a spoken conversation, it can be viewed as a metaphor for different worldviews people have in different geographical, cultural and socio-economical contexts. Connecting to such different understandings involves clarifying those understandings regularly, and better more often than less. Similar to a conversation, it is essential to pick each other up on the current understanding and not assume that research participants have the same understanding of aspects regarding the research topic as we as researchers. Different understandings can concern, for example, understandings of sustainable lifestyles, attitudes toward waste, or cultural heritage. Behaviours, mindsets and knowledge systems differ, and it is essential to consider those when conducting design research.

Lastly, we present a counter perspective to design research as context: In feminist theory, following Donna Haraway, only “situations” exist, including the circumstances creating the situated practice. According to feminist sociologist Adele Clarke, context does not exist outside the actual situation but is a component of a specifically situated world: “The conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as ‘context’” (Clarke 2005, p. 72).
The situation mapping presents all conditions that have an influence on the situation of the student’s work besides the actual thesis project (Fig. 5).

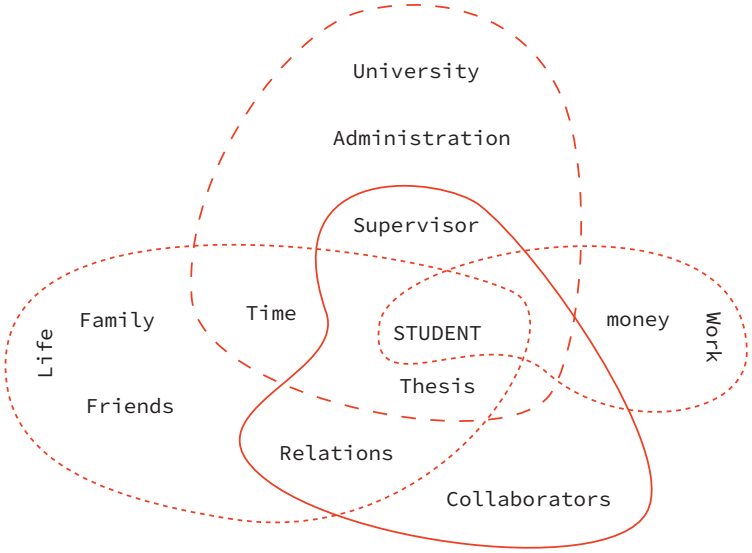

Fig. 5: Situation analysis of doing a thesis.

Confidence and doubt in research

Becoming an academic researcher may be a novel experience for many design practitioners. As designers, we feel competent and experienced. The role of the researcher, however, is new. Here, we have little or no experience and do not yet clearly know what is expected and how to act correctly. We are becoming learners again. How do we feel as experts when we are becoming learners again?

Donald Schon writes: “You feel vulnerable; you feel you don’t know what you’re doing; you feel out of control; you feel incompetent; you feel that you’ve lost confidence.” (Schon, 1987). Naturally, as an evolutionary trait, we wish to avoid these feelings as humans and designers. We seek certainty and clarity, avoiding ambiguity and uncertainty. As researchers, we need to learn to endure those experiences. Here, it is important not to strive for certainty too early, as new insights, methods, and theories might emerge. Enduring ambiguity and uncertainty and being sceptical are essential research skills. Additionally designers might experience two conflicting roles when they pursue academic research: As design practitioners we have learned to be convinced of our design idea, to convince others and arouse an air of confidence and enthusiasm, being defensive to scepticism and critique. As researchers, however, we must also be sceptical of our ideas and insights, and consider conflicting evidence that does not support our theory or insight. In our practice, we wish to be in control, to be certain and convincing – in academic research. We must consider doubt and conflicting arguments and evidence, which can be challenging.

Another layer of complexity is added in that designing is already an activity rooted in research. The designer does not know in the beginning what the correct design outcome will be. Designing is an emergent process, a learning journey involving errors, followed by analysis, reflection and new iterations. Designers trust that their skills, creativity, imagination, intuition, process, models and empathy will lead them to an appropriate design outcome. In such a process of research through design, it is challenging to distinguish between the design process and the research process. Which hat am I wearing? The hat of the researching designer or that of the academic design researcher? This distinction also needs to be learned.

“We do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different – and power-differentiated – communities. We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life.”

Donna Haraway

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DESIGN RESEARCH AS SUPERVISION

HOW TO ACCOMPANY A DESIGN RESEARCH PROCESS

In this short text, we briefly outline our view of design research supervision and thesis project supervision at the master's and doctoral levels. We discuss the roles and responsibilities of the supervised learner and the supervisor.

SUPERVISOR

In our view, a supervisor is a 'guide on the side'. It's not their thesis project. They try to support the learner in finding their own way, thus taking ownership of their research and their individual learning process. Supervisors guide through recommendations, giving information, and communicating reliably, regularly, constructively, and clearly. We also strongly support the idea that those who supervise thesis projects have regular exchanges with other supervisors, sharing their observations, knowledge, and experiences. We recommend offering workshops for supervisors about supervision responsibilities.

WHAT CAN THE SUPERVISED STUDENT EXPECT FROM THEIR SUPERVISOR?

At the first meeting:
- Talk about your roles, your expectations and timescale, the relationship between project work and written thesis, theory and practice
- Communicate assessment criteria
- Address cheating, plagiarism, ethics and honesty
- Agree on the frequency of meetings, possibly more frequent meetings in the beginning

During the process:
- Make time for regular meetings and tutorials
- Give relevant and constructive feedback
- Respond timely to email enquiries

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE SUPERVISED?

- Take responsibility for their research process
- Communicate honestly with their supervisor
- Be motivated and reliable
- Prepare for tutorial meetings
- React to feedback from supervisors
- Make and discuss your own decisions
- Connect and build upon your own knowledge and theory
- Manage own work-plan, goals and pace of work
- Communicate with clarity, also talk about your worries and doubts
- Accept advice, be proactive, send agreed outputs on time

From answers to questions to wonder and curiosity in research

In school, we have learned that knowledge is about knowing how to give correct answers. In graduate studies, we might have learned to ask questions, have discussions, and realise that beyond the school syllabus, knowledge is steeped in ambiguity and controversy, that there are different perspectives, and that there may be many possible answers, perhaps none of them entirely satisfying.
As reflective practitioners and researchers, we also learn to question and be sceptical. It is here that we might find new avenues for research worth exploring. For this, however, we need to suspend our desire for certainty and learn to embrace ambiguity, uncertainty, and curiosity, trusting that new insights will emerge. For this, we must become more interested in questions than in answers, as questions, observations, and critical thinking may drive our research and learning forward.
This approach is different from our learned stance of seeking answers instead of seeking questions. Sometimes, unlearning is the most promising road forward.

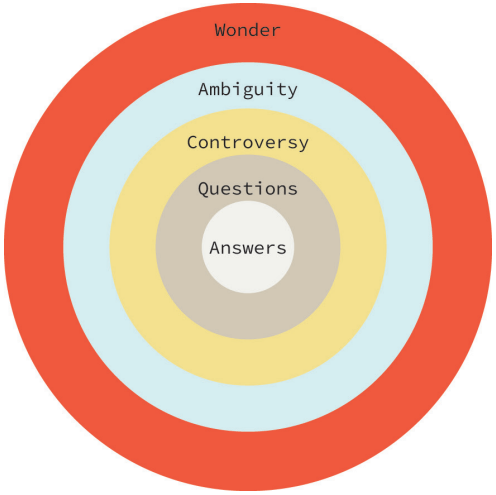

Fig. 6: Adapted from Wesch, Michael: End of wonder, 2014.

FRAMING A DESIGN RESEARCH TOPIC

The proposal, which usually outlines the research interest and the approach to it, comes at the beginning of an academic design research expedition, which is not an easy task.
The following worksheets have proven helpful in supporting design researchers at the starting point of their expeditions.

01. What design research topic do you propose?

Guiding questions:

What is it that you are interested in?

What do you want to investigate?

What are your questions?

What challenges do you observe?

How did you become interested in these questions?

From your personal experiences?

From your academic experiences?

From your professional experiences?

Open questions and comments:

What are you still insecure about?

02. What is the character of your research?

What makes your research a design research?

What distinguishes your research from a research in other disciplines?

Are you researching about design, for example, historical or philosophical design aspects; or design done by others?

Are you researching through design by exploring through practical design experiments)?

Are you researching for design (improved design practices)?

Open questions and comments

What are you still insecure about?

03. What is the story of your topic?

Problem statement

Tell the story of how and why you became interested in exploring this topic.

Open questions and comments

What are you still insecure about?

04. What are your research questions and your purpose statement?

Narrow down your main research question(s)

Based on your responses above, state what you want to explore in question form here!

Try to make it as focused and specific as you can. What are your questions?

Purpose statement

Turn your question into a purpose statement, which conveys the same information as the research question(s)
Example: 'The purpose of the study is to …'

State why your research is significant and to whom?

Open questions and comments:

What are you still insecure about?

05. What is your methodological research approach?

Anticipate your research

Research changes constantly, but it is good to anticipate how you will find out what you are interested in – even if you might not implement it exactly like this.

Describe how you think of conducting your research!

Which research methods do you have in mind?

Open questions and comments

What are you still insecure about?

06. How would you visualise your research process?

Sketch and map different aspects of your research

Interest
Methods
Involved research partners
Locations

Open questions and comments

What are you still insecure about?

07. Which terminology do you need to familiarise yourself with and define?

Clarify terminology

Which terms belonging to the field of your research interest do you need clarification on?

Which ones are ambiguous?

Define them for your own research based on dictionary definitions or literature specifications!

Open questions and comments

What are you still insecure about?

Prepared by Gwendolyn Kulick in 2022, based on a preliminary worksheet set, developed by Dr. Razia Sadik in 2013.

MODULE 5
: DESIGN RESEARCH AS SUPERVISION

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GUC MASTER STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THEIR DESSAU TRIP

Alyeldin Hazem Sakr

2/6 Friday - Trip to Germany
Main points:
- Met with Gwen, Nadine, Omar, Gina and Nourhan at the Cairo International Airport and headed to Berlin, Germany, followed by a train to get to Dessau
- Upon arrival at the train station we were greeted by Michael Hohl who walked us to the guest house where we would stay until the 10th. We left our bags and all went out to a restaurant he suggested where we had pizza for dinner

3/6 Saturday - Indie Game Fest at Köln
Main points:
- Woke up at 4 am and left for the train station to catch the 4:48 AM train from Dessau Hbf to Magdeburg Hbf, and then to Köln. There I checked into the hotel (Christina Hotel) and went straight to the Indie Game Fest at Wasserturm Hotel Cologne
- Game Fest Indie Game Fest (12:00 PM - 9:00 PM)
  - Arrived at the Indie Game Fest, took my Business Pass and attended some very interesting talks including one about the upcoming indie game studios in Malaga, as well as another about mindfulness for game developers
  - Afterwards, I went for my scheduled portfolio review by an industry professional, where I was paired with Christiane Ebrecht (Associate Art Director at Ulisses Spiele)
    > She was extremely helpful and gave a lot of valid constructive criticism, such as:
- “Your Art is great, you are great, your portfolio is terrible” which I 100% agree with
- Need to remove plenty of things and replace them with more updated, more elaborate or fleshed out projects, and to avoid spreading out drawings that fall under the same project into several posts
- Need to focus on my portfolio's narrative. Which aspect do I want people to be directed towards first? What story am I trying to tell employers and fellow artists/designers?
  - She also looked at, and even played some of my in-progress games that I'm using as part of my design research methods, and she had plenty to say about them as well, for example:
- The design language is all over the place, I need to be consist in my shapes, colours and line thickness
- My art and animation style is cute, which I can lean more on, but that means I need to ensure that everything else follows that narrative
- It's very challenging to get into the game industry to pursue animation, and even more so for 2D animation, in a landscape where games are predominantly 3D
  - I also went around the exhibition/booth area and talked to a lot of exhibitors who ranged from game developers, game artists and game programmers, as well as representatives of educational institutes, and made a lot of connections. I also handed out my business cards which I created specifically for this trip, containing a QR code which links to my linktr.ee/RatFace_96 which in turn contains links to games I'm currently working on as part of my A/B tests and game prototype for people to playtest and leave feedback on, as well as a “Become a participant” button which upon clicked allows the person to leave their email for future studies
- After the event ended, I roamed around the city for a while before heading back to the hotel to get ready for the return trip the next day

4/6 Sunday - Heading Back to Dessau
Main points:
- Woke up at 8:00 AM, packed my bags, checked out and headed to the train station to catch the 11:09 AM train from Köln Hbf to Köthen and then to Dessau Hbf. However, the train was cancelled and I was given another trip which would arrive at 5:56 PM instead of the original 4:54 PM, provided there were no delays, which was not the case. I finally reached Dessau at around 7:00 PM. Even though the full day was spent mostly just commuting, I did manage to get some work done on my presentation during that time

5/6 Monday - Workshop (Day 1)

Main points:
- Woke up early to continue working on my presentation
- Met Judith Dobler at the student café then headed to the workshop room in Building 4, where we met three master's students; Tariq Mansi, Maria and Alejandro
- Presentations:
  - All three of them presented their topics, and we gave them some feedback
  - Some of us presented ours (Nadine, Nourhan, and Salma) and they gave some feedback
- After lunch with Tariq at the Mensa (student cafeteria), we attended MA Design Theory with Michael Hohl's students and we watched them present some papers that they were assigned. There I learned about the Double and Triple Diamond Model and found the feedback that Michael gave to his students beneficial for my own presentations
- After getting some groceries from Kaufland (supermarket), we met with Tariq and Maria for a walk and sat at the "pool" (student gathering area) where we had a small picnic. Gwen and Michael then joined us and we ate some of Michael's vegetarian Quinoa. Some other students joined us as well, namely Deepish who would later on join us on some of the other days. He also told me that he would be interested in becoming a play-tester for my game demo (practical project) so I gave him my business card

6/6 Tuesday - Workshop (Day 2)
Main points:
- Woke up early again to finalise my presentation
- Presentations:
  - Sadly none of Tariq, Maria or Alejandro were available this day, as they all had their final thesis submissions due in a week
  - The rest of us who didn't get to present the earlier day (Gina, myself and Omar) presented to just ourselves along with Judith who gave nice feedback. Deepesh joined after Gina's presentation so he only attended mine and Omar's but he gave useful feedback as well
  - With my presentation, I wasn't entirely happy with what I had included, especially because I wanted people to test out the game themselves, but I was short on time.
- After lunch at the Mensa with Deepesh, we headed back to the workshop for some presentations prepared by Karsten, Alberto and Michael. Judith and Sandra joined us there as well:
  - Karsten Schuul did a presentation on the Materiability Lab, as well as gave an overview about his Phd project about active material-based acoustic and sound management systems
  - Alberto Iberbuden did a presentation on his Phd project about creativity as a human resource and the value of creative education, which was very engaging and quite helpful to my topic considering the many similarities they share in regards to subjective elements (soft metrics) such as perception, perspectives and preconceptions. Everyone had said great things about him, so the expectations were high, yet we all still absolutely loved him. He also made us answer 3 questions followed by a mindfulness exercise at the end. The questions were:
    > Based on your experience and learning, what does research in design entail?
    > How is doing research in design different from other disciplines?
    > Do you have any ideas for your own research projects?
- Presentation by Michael Hohl on Practice-Based Research where I learned about some more academic frameworks, models and new information in general. These include:
  - Tacit knowledge
  - What research is in art, design & architecture
  - The difference is between exploratory, testing-out and problem-solving research
  - Normative and positive research
  - Some examples of Phd projects, one of which could potentially be very useful for my project
- Gina, Nadine and I walked around a bit with Tariq, who showed us around. We first went to the river where we sat for a while, ate and chatted. After we came back, we passed by the Living Area and saw Swab (one of the students who would present his work on Thursday) working on his presentation. At that time, we passed by a wall of posters which belonged to a data visualisation assignment and I was particularly drawn to two posters, which had beautiful art. Tariq told me that these two posters actually belong to twins who happen to be artists, and he gave me one of their instagram accounts. It turned out they're quite big on social media and I was very impressed by their work so I contacted them that same night to ask if they would be interested in meeting and we agreed on Wednesday (7/6) after 4:00 PM

7/6 Wednesday - Workshop (Day 3)
Main points:
- Judith gave a presentation on Rules of Engagement, followed by her and Gwen giving us 3 reflection exercises/tasks:
  - Task 1 was divided into two parts:
    > Task 1A: First, we had to create a poster where we reflect on our research topics in 3 sentences. First starting with the present, based on what we learned during our stay thus far, as if we're explaining our topic to our grandmothers. Followed by speculating how we will explain the same project in the future. Adding afterwards how we think we'll bridge that gap
    > Task 1B: Afterwards, we each had to present our poster in just 1 minute. Sadly the first two to present didn't finish in the specified minute and were cut short, but the rest, myself included, learned from their mistakes and did it correctly. We all gave feedback after the person had just presented, in the form of post-it notes that we stuck to the poster. Most of my feedback was related to my confidence and the manner in which I present my work
  - Task 2: After that, Judith and Gwen brought a large piece of paper and titled it "Design Research Access" and divided it into 4 parts. The x-axis had "Existing pool"on the left and "Discovery/Journey" on the right, whilethe y-axis had "Independent self" at the top and "external/guided" at the bottom. We had to write down aspects of our topics on post-it notes and then hang each one at the spot that best aligns with it. Judith then reviewed everything and rearranged some of the notes to where they fit better
  - Task 3: Similarly to Task 2, we received a large paper titled "Design Research Methods" but it was in the form of a graph that had "skills" on the y-axis and "knowledge" on the x-axis. We each had to put aspects of our topics related to research methods and place it on the graph, where we saw fit. Judith also reviewed everything, rearranged some the post-it notes, and clustered the similar ones together
- Trip to the Bauhaus Museum
- After a quick trip to Kaufland (supermarket) we then headed to the student kitchen, for a cooking session where Michael prepared some baked vegetables, Tariq, Maria and Mahdy made chocolate-filled croissants, and we, the Egyptians, prepared Koshary, a famous Egyptian dish. We were joined by Sandra and Oove and after we all finished eating, spent the rest of the evening together in the backyard

8/6 Thursday - Workshop (Day 4)
Main points:
- Went to the workshop room where Gwen, Judith and Sandra, and her students, were waiting. They presented their final thesis projects to us and we gave them feedback, which felt as if it had to be sugar-coated a little because they only had less than a week remaining until their submission. However I still tried to be as thorough as possible and wrote down a long list of suggestions for each one, and discussed most of it during the allotted time for feedback and the rest I shared with them afterwards
- At 4:00 PM when we were all finished, I went to meet with the twins, who were in the middle of a feedback session but their professor didn't mind me joining. We talked for a while and got to know each other a bit better. I asked them some questions but sadly wasn't able to get into my topic too much before it was their turn for feedback. However, as I was ready to leave, the professor said I could stay and listen. I attended their feedback session and listened to their thesis topic which they were still in the process of fleshing out and developing, as well as how the professor handled the feedback which was a beneficial experience for me as a Teaching Assistant. The topic itself was also quite relatable as they talked about the difficulties artists face on social media and how it affects their mental health and development, which we were already discussing beforehand
- We (the GUC students) all walked to the river with Tariq, Maria and some of the other Arab and Egyptian students we met along the way and spent some time there for a picnic before heading back to the "pool" where we sat, chatted, and met some new and interesting people

9/6 Friday - Workshop (Day 5)
Main points:
- For the last workshop day, Judith and Gwen gave us a brief on how to go about the documentation for the trip & we started working
- Went to the Bauhaus guided tour in English, as well as the Master's Houses, which was a fun and informative experience
- Grabbed lunch on the way back to the workshop and continued with the documentation

- Went for a quick trip to Leipzig for a couple of hours with Tariq, Maria and Mahdi but ran into some difficulties with trains being cancelled and the bus driver being lost in the middle of nowhere. We eventually arrived home at around 1:15 AM

10/6 Saturday - Heading back to Berlin
Main points:
- The day was mostly spent commuting. We all got up early to pack and headed to the train station at 8:30 AM when we took the train back to Berlin

Gorgena Kila

This transcultural design research incubator is in my opinion was very informative and enlightening. It opened my eyes to the wealth of the design field. And made me reflect on my master's project from different perspective. From a research point of view; during the presentations of the Dessau students, especially the PHD students Alberto Iberbuden and Karsten Schul, I got to understand design research better; ss they were explained within a practical context. Accordingly, I reflected on my own research, one of my struggles were to narrow down on one problem and continuing the research there. After this collaboration I got insights about which design research methods could work with my project and how to find the research gaps within a research topic. Which I implemented later during the storytelling poster exercise portion of the workshop run by Gwendolyn Kulick and Judith Dobler. And together we reached a defined direction.
Another eye-opening experience was the Futurium and the Baushaus buildings and museum. What really struck me is the combination of the all-design fields, from architecture to photography. In addition to the attention of details and the forward-thinking designs. I think it was also really remarkable to see the actual work of the designers that I teach about in the GUC such as the iconic chair by Marcel Breuer and observe them in close proximity. Not to mention paying closer attention to all the production details, material experi- mentations, playfulness of color schemes and even the flaws. Understanding them broadened my impression of design and its multiple sections.
Other than the academic side of this collaboration, I really enjoyed the campus and its environment. We were all at ease with the closeness of the housing to the campus, how the campus is not a distracting place and full of student activities. We also went to Vorort Haus, a house where students have several workshops that they volunteer to keep running and has a big kitchen where students and faculty all cook together every other week. And we were fortune enough to cook and share a meal with them.
Moreover, as it is an international program, the diversity of people is very informative and exploratory. I got to learn about the student's cultures and how it was hard to adjust in a new country. I found it very interest- ing especially after attending the presentations of the master's students that were more or less related about how to adjust in Dessau, Germany and how to make it a better community in terms of inclusivity and sustainability.
In conclusion, the workshop was rewarding from so many aspects and from my side I believe I got numer- ous insights, direction and inspiration for my next steps on my masters.

Nadine Garir

Participating in the workshop "A Transcultural Design Research Incubator" has been an enriching experience for me. The opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas with master students from Anhalt University has provided valuable insights and perspectives that I would not have gained otherwise. Throughout the workshop, I have been able to reflect on my own research and design approach, as well as learn from the diverse cultural backgrounds of participants.
On the first day of the workshop, I witnessed and observed presentations by MAID students who were in the final stages of their theses. Despite having attended seminars by GUC MSc. students before, I found the MAID students' presentations to be particularly insightful due to the cultural diversity they brought to the table. This exposure to MAID students presentations and different perspectives inspired me to include a comparison table in my own research, specifically in relation to puppetry styles and types which will help me make more informed decisions on which traditional elements to preserve and which to adapt using new media technologies. During the picnic at the pool, I had the opportunity to socialize with more MAID students and engage in further discussions about our ideas and exchange feedback. This informal setting allowed for a deeper exchange of thoughts and experiences, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and dialogue in the research process.

The second day of the workshop featured presentations on the materiability lab and a PhD presentation by Alberto Iberbuden. The materiability lab presentation showcased how different disciplines can converge to create an interdisciplinary approach, which was truly inspiring. Alberto Iberbuden's PhD presentation provided valuable insights on how to enhance my own ideas using tools such as more elaborated Venn diagrams and heat-maps. These concepts opened up new possibilities for me to explore and develop my research further.

On the third day, the 1-Minute MA Poster workshop proved to be helpful in refining my research skills. The process of condensing my research into a brief one-minute presentation and receiving feedback allowed me to make my topic/ story clearer and more engaging. The visit to the Bauhaus Museum also left an impression on me, particularly the interactive elements within the exhibition. However, I wished there were more interactive components, as they have the potential to enhance the visitor's experience further.

Day four focused on design research activities, including a comparison between GUC and Anhalt, design research access, and discussions on skills and knowledge. This segment of the workshop helped me understand how to grasp my current situation and make the most out of it. I gained clarity on which aspects of my research would require guidance and which I could pursue independently. Additionally, I realized that acquiring specific skills is not always necessary to possess design research knowledge. Rather, it is important to be aware of the existence of relevant skills and be able to adapt and shape the research accordingly. Attending the presentations by five MAID students (of Dr. Sandra Giegler), which were strictly timed, provided valuable insights into structuring my own presentations. It allowed me to understand how to allocate time for each part and determine which areas needed more emphasis or could be condensed. This experience will certainly help me improve my future presentations and ensure their effectiveness.

As the workshop approached its end, the final day consisted of reflection writing and a visit to Bauhaus buildings. This day provided an opportunity for self-analysis of the knowledge and experiences gained throughout the workshop. Moreover, the visit to Bauhaus buildings served as a reminder of the rich design heritage and its ongoing influence on contemporary practices.
Overall, the workshop "A Transcultural Design Research Incubator" has broadened my horizons and enriched my understanding of design research. The opportunity to collaborate with international peers, learn from their perspectives, and engage in various activities.

Nourhan Mansour Eman

Participant: Nourhan Mansour Emam (Masters Researcher)
Attending this workshop was highly beneficial for my personal and professional development. It helped me learn and acquire new skills, it opens several networking opportunities by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds, industries, cultures, and experiences. Allowed me to connect with like-minded people, industry experts, and potential mentors. I will discuss my workshop reflections in the upcoming paragraphs.
I will reflect on each day of the workshop by mentioning the plans and my learnings. On Saturday 3rd of June, 2023, we went to Berlin to visit the Futurium Museum and discover the city Berlin. Let us start by the Futurium Museum visit, The Futurium Museum aims to provide a space for exploring and discussing the future through interactive exhibits, discussions, and artistic installations that is interesting and engaging to the visitors and kids too. It focuses on the relation between science, technology, and society. I learned a lot about how our decisions shape our future and how can we save our future using developed design contributions.

In Day 1 of the workshop, we first got introduced to the campus, and to some of the master's students there. Then we started presenting our masters projects. Three of us including me presented our work, and three of the Dessau masters students presented their almost finished projects. This was a valuable learning experience that allowed me to gain insights into different research projects and the process of presenting and academic work. It was an opportunity to learn about the methodologies used to investigate the topic, the presenter presentation skills, the differences between the master's program at the GUC and at Anhalt University. Presenting my work infront of others made me more confident, I had a recommendation of visiting the material lab at campus. Then we attended Micheal Hohl's MA Design Theory class for the first-year students in Integrated design Master's program. Then in the afternoon we went for a picnic with the Dessau students and Micheal at an area they call it "the

pool". We shared food, and had the opportunity for language and cultural exchange especially that all the students we knew are from different countries.

In Day 2 we continued the presentations of the rest of us. Then I had the opportunity to visit the Bio Lab. My visit to the Bio Lab helped me thinking in different aspects in my masters research project. I visited the lab while there was material design class for bachelor students, so I had the chance to speak to the students and the instructor there. My analysis of that visit is coming from the discussion I made with the students, analyzing materials designed there, observing students while creating new materials, observing the lab, the tools, machines, raw materials. Gathering some information from the books there, and the flyers made for previous materials. I can conclude from that visit that alot of materials testing is being generated there by students or researchers. When I asked the students, what product are you thinking of producing using this material, some have not thought of any application. Others have a product in mind which was a plant pot, but they were not sure if the material they made would fit in that application or not. Others were kept on developing their materials but without thinking of a specific application for it. Their main aim was to achieve a durable, and a biodegradable material. This makes me think that the problem I am tackling in my research might not be wasted materials from agriculture, but the amount of materials that are being tested and developed every day but without designed applications.
Then we had a lecture by Karsten Schuhl who introduced the materiability lab and his PhD. I had the chance to have answers for questions I always had in mind from an expert in the field of material design. Such as the differences between material engineering and material designing, how do they test their materials, why he is not using an innovated material in his PhD. Project, if they have a material library or not. After this fruitful lecture, we had another lecture by Alberto Iberbuden in which he presented his PhD. Research findings. It was very informative, I started comparing master's projects to PhD projects and tell the difference. It also allows me to observe how he communicated his research findings, how he simplifies complex concepts, highlights key findings, and how he relates his research to broader contexts.

In Day 3 we had an activity, which is creating a poster about our topic and present it in one minute. It helped me to be more precise with my words and to focus on the key points and deliver them clearly and concisely. Then we had a visit to the Bauhaus Museum which was a nice opportunity to explore the rich history and influences of the Bauhaus movement. Functionality was a key principle of the Bauhaus aiming to create practical and efficient designs. This principle refused to use any unnecessary ornamentation and encouraged the use of clean lines and simple geometric forms in the designs. The Bauhaus embraced modern industrial materials and technology back then. It sought to explore their potential in design and architecture, incorporating materials such as glass, steel, and concrete. In the afternoon, we went to the Vorothaus to cook dinner together and it was fun, we got to share stories and experiences with each other.

In Day 4 we made some research activities such as Design Research studies Comparison between GUC and Anhalt, Design Research Access, and Design Research Methods "Skills and Knowledge" these were beneficial because they help spark innovation and creativity by discovering new perspectives, understanding things better, sharing thoughts, discussing opinions, and finding new possibilities for design. After that we had another chance to attend the rehearsal of the presentations of 5 Masters students, these were very informative, we had opportunity to learn about particular research topics and had the chance to give feedback and raise some questions. At the afternoon, we were invited to visit the ceramics workshop at the Vorothaus, we went there and it was fun trying things by hand and exploring the place.

In Day 5 we started by working on the documentation, then we had a tour in the Bauhaus buildings. I learned more through analyzing the architecture and the design details. Listening to historical stories of the Bauhaus movement, finding inspirations, and creating my own assumptions and insights.

Omar Abdelrehim

Dessau is the ideal destination for designers and artists, residing there for a week amid all the historical and influential buildings, the nature, scenery and ambient sounds was mind liberating. These elements combined, fuel one's creativity and eliminate any distortion. Having all buildings and facilities commuted in the same area also saves and employs one's energy in work duties and study programs.Visting all the buildings in the Bauhaus City was highly captivating and crucial, having the opportunity to get to know the history of the Bauhaus and its influence on the design world through an on-ground experience is definitely something every designer should go through.
Working at Hochschule Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, observing the students daily lives and activities, the university's facilities and how they operate, the classes and feedbacks given by the professors there was enriching. It drew a line on the similarities and differences between Hochschule Anhalt and the German University in Cairo, and this developed a better understanding of different characters and approaches in professors, different teaching and guiding methods, different curricula and assignments.
Travelling in time with Futurium, visting and imagining future scenarios in social, industrial, medical, contexts was enlightening. Having the opportunity to look into future problems and concerns, understanding the future users' mindsets and needs and the importance of design, research and design research in providing solutions through various approaches in different fields allowed oneself to be innovating and having a futuristic vision.

Dinner at VorOrt with the professors and Masters students from Hochschule Anhalt was an amazing cross-cultural gathering. We had the communal kitchen at VorOrt reserved for ourselves where each side contributed with cooking something to all and so it was also an exchange of food in a light friendly atmosphere where everyone was enjoying their time. After the dinner we also had insightful discussions with Prof. Dr. Michael Höhl and Prof. Uwe Gellert about the academic systems and programs in Germany.
Attending the pre-final presentations of Masters Students under Dr. Sandra Giegler's supervision was a highly needed exercise for both parties; from our side it was essential as designers but also as design teaching assistants learning how to critically ask students about their projects and respectfully give them constructive useful feedbacks on their concepts and presentations without any biases. On the other hand, it was benefitial to the students to receive different feedback from other design students whom had no prior knowledge of their projects and progresses as a preparation for their final presentations and also learning how to humbly accept feedback, the students approvingly validated the comments from our side, were really grateful for them and furtherly discussed the main remarks privately following the end of our session and their presentations.
Exchanging feedback with Masters students under Alberto Iberbuden's supervision on our masters projects and presentations, highlighting similarities in our topics and observing how different design processes, dissimilar approaches, unfamiliar research methods are applied in similar topics and vice versa all was eye-opening on globally addressed issues and common strategies.
Attending the weekly presentations of Bachelor Students under Prof. Dr. Michael Hohl's supervision helped us differentiate between Masters and Bachelors students at Hochschule Anhalt, between bachelor students at the German University in Cairo and at Hochschule Anhalt and also between the bachelor projects in both universities.

Attending the research methods' presentation by Prof. Dr. Michael Höhl's was really beneficial, he informed us about some important research methods; where do they came from or how they where originated, when, how to apply them & why and how to classify them. Giving feedback to an Associate professor and a PhD student Alberto Iberbuden on his project was noteworthy, critizing a professor whom is also a student in a higher education level and a project that is more advance than ours was a challenge. It was really interesting attending a PhD presentation and observing how the student humbly and thoroughly received feedback and how he smartly applied his theory in hand on us the attendees.
Doing exercises with Dr. Judith Dobler was a highly needed activity, it allowed us to develop a better understanding of our own projects and goals, of ourselves as designers and to conclude what are the similarities and differences between the German University in Cairo and Hochschule Anhalt and the takeaways and outcomes of the research trip.
Last of all, while wandering around Dessau during our time there I randomly came across different wall grafittis of the word Msc. as if this research trip and going to Dessau was destined.

Salma Borhan Eldin

I started my master's degree in the spring of 2023 and I am at the very beginning of the journey. My eyes and mind were opened by the Trans-Cultural Design Research Incubator Program regarding where to begin, how to proceed, and what to expect from the process. It was also really beneficial for me to share my experience and background with the master's and PhD students at HochSchule Anhalt University of Applied Science in Dessau. We shared information about our various cultures, languages, and points of view in our fields. They were also excellent an company while we explored Dessau over the

course of a week, visiting lakes, rivers, and parks.
We began the program during our week in Dessau by introducing ourselves to the international students and outlining the various stages of our master's degree projects. Great lecturers like Michael Hohl, Alberto Iberbuden, and Judith Dobler gave us lectures on design research, projects that might inspire us, and rules of engagement. Gwendolyn Kulick and Judith Dobler taught us how to use design research studies, design research access, and design research methods on our projects during a workshop. We were also requested to give a one-minute presentation of our master's project, explaining how it was now formatted and how it would evolve in the future after we attended the program and heard from all the experts. We visited the master's degree defense preparations for Professor Sandra Giegler's students one week before to the day of the defense. We provided them with some criticism and notes, and they were extremely appreciative. We were invited by Professor Michael Hohl to watch first-year Masters students give presentations about the papers and theories they were asked to discuss.
My favorite and most fascinating experience was taking a tour of the Bauhaus campus and museum. Visiting the Bauhaus and seeing what we had studied throughout our time in design school was a dream come true. We gained a better understanding of the Bauhaus's past and observed a lot of the students' earlier work.
One of the fascinating features is that we accepted the professor Michael Hohl's invitation to collaborate with him and arrange a dinner together. We created the Koshary, the national meal of Egypt, as a group. The HochSchule Anhalt University students assisted in the preparation while also baking several treats. We had the opportunity to learn about one another's culinary traditions and also to create enduring memories.

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