



Methodology in Artistic and Practice-Based Design Research

Credit points: 7,5 ECT

Course code:

Responsible department: Umeå Institute of Design

Main field of study: Industrial Design

Level: PhD

Specialisation in relation to degree requirements: Doctoral degree in Industrial Design

Subject area: experimental, artistic and practice-led design research

Grading scale: Pass / Fail

Any programme affiliation:

Confirmation

This syllabus was approved by the Research Council at Umeå Institute of Design, Umeå University, on 2012-11-14 and is valid from the autumn term of 2012.

Contents

Research methodology, distinct from research methods, refers to the overall framework and structure of the research process. Whereas designers (design researchers included) typically have access to a vast range of methods, the question of how a given set of methods comes together to form a specific line of inquiry is much less obvious. Often in the case of design, this integrative role is played by 'practice', i.e. that we have acquired – through training and experience – an over-arching way of working, of organising everything from concepts and information to physical materials, that we use as our platform for integrating and even creating methods as we go.

When engaging in research, the way that this integration happens is central to whether what we produce will actually make a difference or not – and thus something we need to be able to articulate, explain, share and critically reflect upon. Further, since the purpose of research is different from professional practice, one can not assume that basic rationales of design as practiced will be equally valid as a research methodology. At the same time, much of what typically characterises design practice will be essential also to what we may think of as a design research practice, such as an artistic process, the creation and physical making of new concepts and objects, the aim for maintaining a holistic (human-centred) view - perhaps even more so when a more specialised and technical focus seems like an easier way forward in the light of traditional requirements of academic research. Thus, we face certain difficulties when it comes to the structure of methodology and the role of design practice.

The course aims to present and discuss methodological issues in contemporary experimental, artistic and practice-led design research with focus on interactions between theory, practice and knowledge. Although this means that its focus is rather narrow, the purpose is not to establish one foundational methodological approach for design research, but to see patterns in the pluralism of what can be considered 'best practice', that is, successful examples of how apparent tensions between theory and practice, academic research and design experimentation, can be addressed.

Expected learning outcomes

- An understanding of key methodological issues in practice-led and artistic design research in general, and of issues pertaining to interactions between theory and practice in such research in particular.
- A basic understanding of programmatic approaches to design research
- An ability to locate and articulate methodological issues in one's own research, as well in the research of others.
- An ability to craft methodological frameworks and design research programs in response to given research aims and requirements.

Required knowledge

Qualifications for admission to PhD programme in industrial design, or equivalent.

Form of instruction

Lectures, seminars and workshops.

Examination modes

Examination is held both orally and in writing, individually and in group. The assessment of the course is based upon active seminar participation, the submission of requested deliverables during the course, an individual oral presentation in lecture form, and a final individual paper based on the course topics.

Grades on the course are awarded when students have passed all examinations and compulsory course elements. After completing the course, one of the grades Fail (U) or Pass (G) is awarded the student. A student who for two consecutive examinations for the same course has not been passed, has the right to have another examiner appointed, if there are no special reasons against this (Higher Education Ordinance chapter 6, 22 §). The request for a new examiner shall be made in writing to the Research Council of Umeå Institute of Design.

Academic credit transfer

Equivalency credits for this course can only be given if it can be shown through transcripts and course plans that a similar course has been passed and after the supervisor and examiner for the PhD education have evaluated and approved the students' individual level of skills and knowledge.

Course literature

Biggs, M and Karlsson, H. (Eds., 2010). *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Routledge.

Brandt, E., Redström, J., Agger Eriksen, M. and Binder, T. (2011). *XLAB. The Danish Design School* Press.

Cross, N. (2001). *Designerly Ways of Knowing: Design Discipline Versus Design Science*. *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, Nr. 3, 49-55.

Frayling, C. (1993). *Research in Art and Design*. *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, 1, 1-5.

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

Seago, A. and Dunne, A. (1999). *New methodologies in art and design research: the object as discourse*. *Design Issues*, Vol. 15 No. 2, 11-17.

Additional literature will be selected each time the course is given.