

RESEARCH THEME

Title of the doctoral research Design studies as re-visions of material culture.
Status and emerging new perspectives for product use/shape/function evolutions within material culture

Proponent professor Silvia Pizzocaro

Abstract Along with research perspectives opened by the emerging performances of contemporary products, the proposed research field is embedded in the *status* and perspectives of the in progress interpretation of *material culture*, summarized by the following question: could we further proceed towards improved critical reflections on tangible product use, shape, functions, as resulting from the interplay between designer mind patterns and people behaviours?

The proposed *multi-foci* research theme has the overarching objective to pursue and consolidate areas of knowledge for critical interpretations in tangible product design fields, while emphasizing the centrality of an in depth understanding of the current material culture. Based on multifaceted study interests – either theoretical and critical and applied –, this research direction may address:

- investigations directed to the critical approaches to product use as social construction,
- investigations reflecting the current and prospective *status* of design studies in relation to emerging product use/shape/function re-definitions,
- investigations turning into critical strands for product studies,
- investigations directed to new interpretations for current material culture,
- investigations directed to the development of research methods for innovative cultural studies to be integrated into design studies.

Multiple tracks are thus proposed to solicit either reflection and investigation around the discourse and on the terrain of:

- product use as a mediator between designer mind patterns and user behaviours
- phenomenologies of the *product-in-use*
- product use as shaped by cultural models
- product “designed” use vs. product “actual” use.

Keywords Material culture, design studies, design cultures, product design, user-centred design