

# RESEARCH THEME

XXXVIII cycle – a.y. 2022/2023

**Title of the doctoral research** Design Futures as reflexive changemaker: understanding how future-connected studies and methodologies change design practice

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**Abstract** The progressive complexity of our world, the close recent war, the pandemic turn and climate events underline once more that the practice of democracy challenge us as everyday citizens. Design practice and research methodologies need to be urgently reframed in an approach that we call ‘Design Futures’(DF). This is a matter of Design taking on a far more proactive role, anticipating and working prospectively to look ahead of the immediate or short term (Celi & Morrison, 2018). In this practice it is necessary to create and explore methodologies that decentre the human, consider truly the nonhuman, in order to meaningfully engage in the design of alternative futures with more responsible, accountable, and ethical ways especially when considering emerging technologies. This research may take into account several different perspectives between which:

-Changing Time conception and role: in order to avoid a predetermined direction, a specific arrow of time leading to a particular, and singular, social, as well as technological and design, future we must recognize that the recent physical discoveries of time (quantum theories) are folding our present and demanding for a different conception of future and anticipation;

-Unlearning knowledge production models: knowledge production is codified within set of beliefs and notions rooted and stratified in cultural contexts and practices, and cognitive domains, both at individual and organizational level. Post-phenomenology and an object-oriented ontology urges to decolonize design practice to develop a new epistemological approach to uncertainty without imposing univocal and pre-assumed approaches;

- Changing methodologies: methodologies that become relevant to design futures and futures studies, may include approaches to discourse analysis, ethnography, participatory action research but pushing them to the most innovative object oriented ontologies and post phenomenology in order to include the pervasive technological dimension.

Such perspectives may also be seen as part of a ‘designerly’ turn in the social sciences reflected in a range of mixed and hybrid approaches. In other words: ‘what’ and ‘how’, along with convergence upon certain methodological issues and developments, ‘the future’ is folded into more general and larger approach to study and change the present?

To advance the DF knowledge the Ph.D candidate, after an initial desk research (literature review and case studies analysis), will be involved in action research (eg. funded projects as Fuel4Design) and by setting small scale testing (eg. educational field) to explicitly study process and methods

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**Keywords** Design Futures, Decolonization, Object-oriented-ontologies