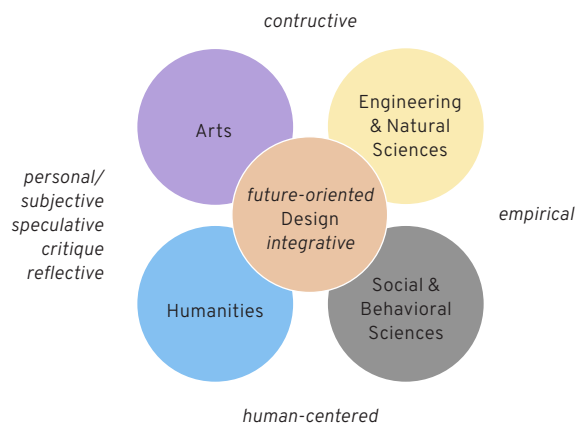


What’s in Design Research

Design research builds on traditions in various other disciplines, and is developing its own methods, sometimes in overlap with several of these.



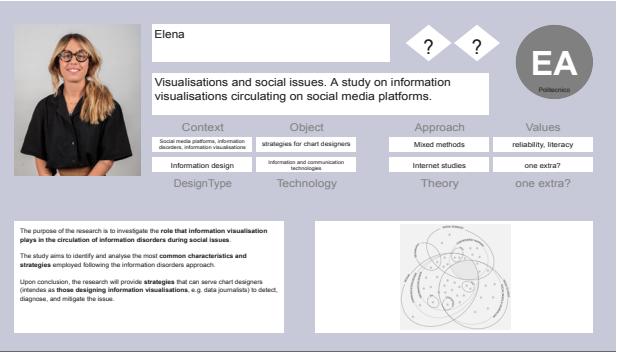
This diversity is a great basis for cross-fertilization, and creates a need for connecting within and between programmes.

See the ‘Map & Glossary’, the ‘Representations’ tool, and the Research through Design course.

Vignettes help to introduce your work and find peers

Courses and events are great occasions for PhD candidates to build their network. One challenge, especially for new PhD candidates is to describe themselves and their work in terms that help finding interesting partners. The vignette tool is an ‘introduction card’ that can be easily filled in, and shared, either physically or online. The format is half-open, and users are invited to describe eight aspects of their work. To lower the threshold from ‘correct answers’ to ‘inspiring discussion-starters’, these aspects are explained with wordclouds of keywords from PhD theses, rather than formal definitions.

See ‘Vignette’ tool and the report and paper on ‘theses analysis’.



What’s a PhD in Design?

When compiling our glossary of terms used to describe our practices, one basic issue came back again and again: there is not a single definition of what a ‘PhD in Design’ is or what a ‘PhD in Design’ programme does. Here are four ingredients:

1. **doing a PhD at an institution that researches and teaches design;**
2. **doing a PhD that extends an earlier master in design;**
3. **doing a PhD that raises one’s design competencies;**
4. **doing PhD research that is about design.**

Notably, only ingredient 1 held for all six of our programmes, ingedients 2-4 being present to some degree, but not everywhere and rarely required.

See pages 15-16 in the ‘Map & Glossary’.



What can PhD graduates do?

In the recent past, the PhD was seen as the preparation for a career in academia. Recently it has indeed become a more regular requirement for an academic position, and currently about half of our PhD graduates continue in academia (in design or other disciplines). But increasingly, as in other disciplines, PhD graduates continue in jobs in industry or elsewhere in society. And PhD programmes have to (1) prepare their candidates for such careers, (2) have a story toward societal parties (future employers) of the merits of the PhD in Design. For many, this is still a new perspective.

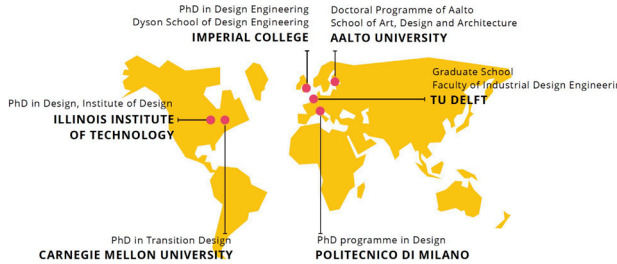
In roundtable discussions with different stakeholders, we found some ‘selling points’ for PhD graduates, and ‘attention points’ for programmes.

See the ‘Provocations’ tool, and reports on the round table discussions on non-profit, industry, and impact.



6 Programmes in DoCS4Design

- Delft University of Technology**  
Delft, the Netherlands
- Politecnico di Milano**  
Milan, Italy
- Imperial College**  
London, UK
- Aalto University**  
Helsinki, Finland,
- Carnegie Mellon University**  
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
- Illinois Institute of Technology**  
Chicago, IL, USA



for Learners (PhD candidates)

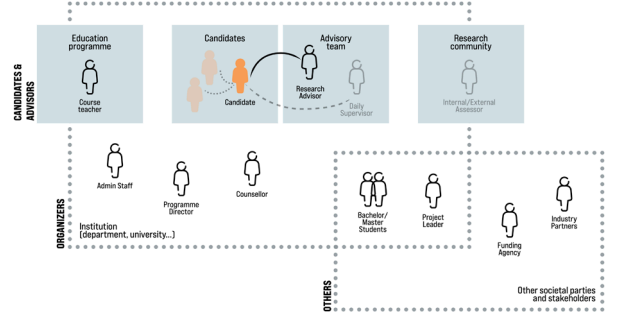
Many PhD candidates started their PhD with some understanding of what to expect, provided in the setting of their local institution. Often this is the only perspective given. It helps if you understand the differences, know what (other) models for the PhD exist. This can help you select a programme, or interact with other programmes, peer candidates, and advisers. For instance when taking part in an exchange, to build your peer network, or to find connections for after the PhD.

You’ll enjoy the ‘Map & Glossary’; look at the ‘Provocations’ tool which contain opinions and insights about the careers for whic the PhD (should) prepare(s). The ‘Vignette’ and ‘Representations’ tools can help you identify where you stand, or connect to peers.

for Teachers (PhD advisers)

Many PhD advisers are familiar with the programme in which they did their own PhD and the structure and regulations at the place where they now work. Understanding the variety of practices can help understand the place where you now work better. And it helps you prepare for collaborations with other programmes, e.g., in EU projects; or interacting with visiting exchange candidates and participants in PhD courses you teach.

You’ll enjoy the ‘Map & Glossary’; look at the ‘Provocations’ tools (and roundtable reports) for current views on the new career paths for PhDs in Design. The ‘Vignette’ and ‘Representations’ tools can be useful tools for starting workshops.



Supporting the PhD in Design

for Organisers (PhD programmes)

Those who support graduate schools are often very familiar with the regulations that are being developed at their institution (often at the own programme, but under strict alignment with a university or national level). You may benefit from knowing the international practices from other institutions, especially if you have to deal with quality control, facilitating exchange, incorporating course credits from other organisations. You’ll probably recognize the glossary and the varieties of terms used in different places. You may benefit from comparing the regulations, and especially the support structures at the other institutions. In the project we all learned from each other’s institutions, especially those who are different from ours in scale.

You’ll enjoy the ‘Map & Glossary’. If you organize courses, you may want to point your teachers at the ‘Vignette’ and ‘Representations’ tools.





## Training Events

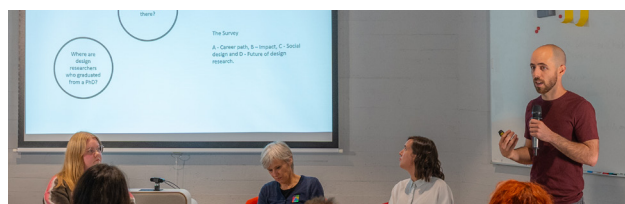
We organized a series of training events, with some 50 PhD advisers and 150 PhD candidates participating. The trainings addressed general and new competencies for PhD in Design. These were:

- Competencies for Advising
- Competencies for Research
- Competencies for Entrepreneurship
- Competencies for Social Impact

and one extra,

- Research through Design

On the DoCS4Design.eu website we have placed training reports describing the purpose, method of the course. Some of these reports come with learning materials and references.



## EU Directions

Many of us involved in PhD programmes see mainly the local policy, sometimes the national policy. It is helpful also to understand the larger-scale directions, as can be found in the EU Salzburg recommendations. These indicate existing constraints (e.g., programmes take 3 or 4 years, original research is an element) and (future) directions which are now seen at some programmes, such as:

- interdisciplinary and international experience
- preparation for a career outside academia
- formal training for advisers
- a desire for critical mass and diversity of programmes, and mobility of candidates and advisers between programmes

See page 12 in the 'Map & Glossary'.

## The Map & Glossary

A founding effort for DoCS4Design was to describe and compare the practices in our programmes. This required gathering descriptions and data, and especially harmonizing the jargon that is used at each institution.

We had already started gathering general descriptions, such as 'when did the PhD in Design start', 'how is supervision, education, and research organised', 'who goes into the programme, and what happens to those who come out'.

In part this was data collection, but quickly we found it was sensemaking. For example, the start of the PhD programme involved three dates: the start of the design education, the first PhDs, or the founding of a formal programmatic structure. Similar diversity was found in the amount, content, and structure of education, and the amount and freedom of the research component.

We compiled our insights into a brochure called 'Map & Glossary' which we shared within our programmes, and with the academic community in the DRS 2022 conference.



The Map & Glossary is a 85-page brochure which can be downloaded from DoCS4Design.eu

## The WunderLibrary

In the new networked world, there is increasing emphasis on PhD candidates to gain interdisciplinary and international experience. There is also more opportunity to make use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) that are made available outside one's own institution.

For the PhD in Design, we believe that learning paths will increasingly use varied materials selected by the PhD candidates themselves from the offers of inside and outside institutions.

To support both candidates and programmes, we envisage the WunderLibrary, a repository of learning materials where institutions can offer OERs, and candidates can compile their own collections. As the name suggests, the WunderLibrary unites the inspirational, exemplary, and instantiated qualities of a Wunderkammer (cabinet of curiosities) with the informative, organized, relational structure of a Library.

## Related projects

A lot is happening regarding design education, and the PhD in design. DoCS4Design focused on mapping existing practices of the PhD in Design at six established schools. But there's more:

Erasmus+ projects: The project D-Doc collected an overview of 173 European doctoral programmes in design, with some descriptors. Graduate Spirit documented ways of international exchange for the PhD in the social sciences. Creator Doctus explored a '3rd level' alternative to the PhD for the arts. There have been several efforts at setting new directions for design education in general, sometimes addressing the PhD. One is the IF foundation's 'Designing Design Education' (2021) which features discussions with educators from all continents. Another is the Future of Design Education effort led by Norman, Davis, and van der Waarden, which reported in a special issue of She Ji journal (2023).

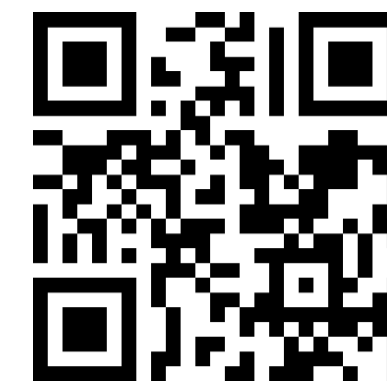
## Impact of Social Design and of the PhD in Design

As design research grows, both in number researchers and the job opportunities for them in different areas, it is important that we understand the impact of our work on people and societies. We have asked graduates from design PhD programmes across our institutions to first, tell us about their career paths and how they have reached their current positions, and second, tell us what capabilities they believe are more important to achieve positive social impact in their work.



The results of this research can help students to reflect on their own capabilities and their career prospects, as well as staff to develop courses and activities that prepare students better for their future work.

Some results of this research can be found in the publication "Faint Traces of Social Impact in Design Ph.D." .



See website DoCS4Design.eu

## Publications

- Mattioli, F., Figoli, F.A., and Stappers, P.J. (2024) Connecting the PhD in Design: How PhDs Label Their Thesis Research, in Proceedings of Learn X Design 2023: Futures of Design Education. <Accepted for publication; to appear in January>.
- Stappers, P.J. & van Boeijen, A.G.C. (Eds.) (2022) PhD in Design - A Map & Glossary. Delft: Delft University of Technology. <http://DoCS4Design.eu>
- Stappers, P.J., Teixeira, C., Rampino, L., Baxter, W., Hyysalo, S., and Chapman, J. (2022) Guiding the PhD in design: Experiences from six programs, in Lockton, D., Lenzi, S., Hekkert, P., Oak, A., Sádaba, J., Lloyd, P. (eds.), DRS2022: Bilbao, 27 June - 3 July, Bilbao, Spain. <https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2022.845>
- Stappers, P.J., Sleeswijk Visser, F. & van Boeijen, A. (2023) Design Labels: The words that Divide and Unite Us. Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of the European Academy of Design. Espoo, 19 October 2023. Blücher, p728-736. <invited for The Design Journal, 2024>
- Nader Sayúna, M., Hodson, E., & Gulaya, E. (2023) Faint Traces of Social Impact in Design Ph.D. Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of the European Academy of Design. Espoo, 19 October 2023. Blücher, p748-758.