

PhD in Design
PROVOCATIONS

PhD in Design - PROVOCATIONS

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This document builds on the Round Table Discussions of the DoCS4Design project:
For details, see the reports on the round table discussions on <http://DoCS4Design.eu>.

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The provocations are based on two roundtables with stakeholders from practice, and EU directions in the Map & Glossary document
Dastoli, C., Bataineh, D., Chapman, J., & Teixeira, C. (2023). RoundTable around the Design PhD beyond Academia: Multiplier Event in New York (E1). Project Report. DoCS4Design project. Available at <http://DoCS4Design.eu>
van Boeijen, A., & Nader, M. (2024): Multiplier Event in New York (E1). Project Report. DoCS4Design project. Available at <http://DoCS4Design.eu>
Stappers, P.J. & van Boeijen, A.G.C. (Eds.) (2022) PhD in Design - A Map & Glossary. Delft: Delft University of Technology. <http://DoCS4Design.eu>



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PhD in Design PROVOCATIONS

The PhD in Design PROVOCATION cards help candidates, advisors, and program developers to discuss the added value of a PhD in Design in practice.

Why?

The PhD in Design is a relatively young branch of the PhD tree that has various manifestations, depending on the design institute, research questions, and research culture. Organisations (e.g. companies, design studios, governmental institutes, non profit organisations) could benefit from design researchers with a PhD in design degree, but often do not know about it, the added value, or have different ideas about what the PhD in Design entails.

What?

The PROVOCATION cards are a set of statements, showing the emerging new dimensions of considering what the PhD in Design is, or can be, or can become. And can be used to have a discussion about the role and relevance of design researchers with a PhD in Design degree in practice.

Mindset & context

The statements are based on three round table discussions in New York and in Helsinki, with parties outside the direct education, organised by the partners of the DoCS4Design project. The notes from these conversations provided a number of perspectives, opinions, views, aspects that are worthy of consideration, completed with guidelines from the EU Salzburg Recommendations (see Map & Glossary, Table 1, page 12).

When and How?

This tool can be used in various situations, e.g. in roundtable conversations with stakeholders in a transdisciplinary research project, or in an introduction in a PhD in Design programme, or any time by individual candidates, educators, organisers for reflection.

Tips & Concerns

- The intention was not to have a complete and timeless set of statements, which means that statements can become less relevant and new ones could be added.
- Use the empty cards to add your own provocations.
- Use the vignettes to get to know each other, for example, when using the provocations in a workshop or roundtable dialogue.

PROVOCATIONS about the PhD degree

1

The essence of doctoral training lies in advancing knowledge through groundbreaking original research.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg I, 2005)

2

Doctoral candidates should be recognized as early-stage researchers, challenging the notion of them being mere subordinate interns.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg I, 2005)

3

Doctoral programs are designed to equip candidates for a diverse array of career paths, not just academia.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg I, 2005)

4

Achieving a critical mass and diversity is essential for the enrichment and quality of doctoral education.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg I, 2005)

5

Gaining international and interdisciplinary experience is a fundamental aspect of a doctoral candidate's journey.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg II, 2010)

6

Diversity among PhD programmes is key.

based on Conclusions and Recommendations
(Salzburg I, 2005)

PROVOCATIONS about the PhD in Design from non-profit organisations

1

Incorporating PhD-level Design Research can significantly transform traditional organizational practices.

2

The codification of Design through a PhD program establishes a concrete identity for the discipline.

3

The expertise of PhDs in Design lies in turning abstract concepts into concrete actions, thereby advocating for design's significance in organizational and societal spheres.

4

The systemic approach of a PhD in Design is crucial for maintaining and creating new spaces for critical intervention.

5

The perceived elitism and obscurity of a PhD in Design have significant implications for the field and its practitioners.

6

Organizations play a key role in demystifying the PhD in Design to unlock its societal and cultural potential.

PROVOCATIONS about the PhD in Design from industry

1

PhDs in Design are pivotal in problem-solving, using Design as a risk reduction tool while fostering critical perspectives in new fields.

2

The PhD in Design plays a crucial role in building communities by enhancing the discipline's multilingual capabilities.

3

In large companies, a PhD in Design legitimizes ideas and positions through its solid theoretical underpinnings.

4

The PhD in Design is instrumental in deciphering and connecting complex elements within company processes.

5

Clarifying the role of a PhD in Design is essential to dispel the misconception that it focuses primarily on beauty and aesthetics.

6

Enhancing the role of PhDs in Design in companies requires a strategic triangulation with academia and consultancies, leveraging their access to decision-makers.

PROVOCATIONS about the PhD in Design about social impact

1

A PhD in Design equips individuals with unique skills like bridging research with practice and visualizing complexity, challenging the notion that they are costlier.

2

The ability of theoretically inclined professionals to effectively bridge to practical realities and be decisive is a critical concern in professional practice.

3

There is a pressing need for academia and practice to demystify design research, communicate its value, and foster transdisciplinary collaboration.

4

The perceived gap between academic theory and practical reality diminishes when design researchers in academia collaborate closely with external organizations.

5

The skillsets of unlearning, facilitating change, negotiating, and crisis awareness are as crucial as traditional academic skills for today's design researchers.

6

DoCS4Design



Doctoral Courses System for Design