PD ARTS + CREATIVE

TITLE: COMPLEX RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTS

ECTS (hours)	Contact hours	Self-study hours
5 ec (140 hours)	20	112

When:

Thursday 21 May, 10:30-16:30

Friday 22 May, 10:30-16:30

Thursday 28 May, 2026, 11:00-15:00

Location:

Thursday 21 May: Theater Utrecht, Boorstraat 107, Utrecht. Studio 3

Friday 22 May: Theater Utrecht, Boorstraat 107, Utrecht. Studio 3

Thursday 28 May: Social Impact Factory, Vredenburg 40, Utrecht. Room: Sydney

Brief Description:

Explore the multifaceted landscape of complex research environments tailored specifically for artistic and design researchers. This module delves into the complexities of navigating intricate research contexts, drawing insights from the expertise of Dr.ir. Wina Smeenk and Dr. Veerle Spronck and their innovative research projects. The module emphasizes the transformative potential of artistic and design research in addressing complex societal issues. By examining case studies and practical examples, participants will explore how artistic interventions and design opportunities can contribute to meaningful societal change. From urban revitalization projects to community-driven initiatives, artistic and design research offer unique perspectives and approaches to tackle contemporary challenges.

Met opmerkingen [ws1]: challenges? serieuzer?

Topics covered include inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration, boundary crossing, multi-value creation, systemic perspectives, first-person perspective, embodiment, (behavioral) change, knowledge 'transfer' via knowledge products, impact, ethical considerations, and the integration of artistic and design practice into academic research. By the end of the module, participants will be equipped with valuable insights and practical strategies to thrive in diverse complex research settings within the artistic, design and social domains.

Learning Goals:

The learning goals of this module fall within ‘Enabling change', which is one of the four dimensions of the PD-degree, related to the PD role of change agent.

- Identify and analyze the enablers and deterrents of change in the research context.
- Articulate the imagined and realized pathways of change resulting from artistic and design research.
- Operate convincingly and trustworthy in complex research environments

Programme

PD ARTS + CREATIVE

For day 1, please bring research material from your project (for instance images, books, objects, non-human entities, sounds etc.) to the stage of the Co-Design Canvas

Day 1: 21h of May by Wina Smeenk

The *Co-Design Canvas* (see references) will support PD candidates this first day in setting up a provisional and adaptive research strategy and plan by addressing eight crucial co-design research elements: Context, Purpose, Focus, Stakeholders (including non-humans), Impact, Results, Settings and Activities.

Learnings of this day include:

- Introduction and embodiment of the Co-Design Canvas based on PD candidates' own projects
- Introduction and exploration of 'Knowledge Products' as boundary objects between research and practice
- Plenary reflection on the learnings, individual reflection in logbook
- Introduce the assignment for assessment

Literature

- Smeenk, W (2023). The Co-Design Canvas, a proven design tool for societal impact. Bis publishers, Amsterdam. https://www.bispublishers.com/co-design-canvas.html
- Smeenk, W (2023). The Empathic Co-Design Canvas: A Tool for Supporting Multi-Stakeholder Co-Design Processes. *International Journal of Design* [Online] 17:2. Available: https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/4482
- Smeenk, W., ZIelhuis, M. & van Turnhout (2024). Bridging the research-practice gap: understanding the knowledge exchange between design research and social design practices. Journal of Engineering Design. Available: https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/IWYJC4AVSMVKFXIA9NW9/full?target=10.1080/09544828.2024.2322170
- Van Turnhout, K., Andriessen, D., Losse, M. & Smeenk, W. (2026). *Kennisproducten uit praktijkgericht onderzoek.* Boom Uitgevers Amsterdam.

Day 2: 22th of May by Wina Smeenk & Veerle Spronck

This day centres on working with *Systemic Script Constellations* as a way to engage with the complexity of participants' own research environments (see https://publinova.nl/product/scriptopstellingen). Through a series of guided, performative exercises, PD candidates map and enact stakeholder constellations, making visible where frictions, uncertainties, dilemmas and tensions emerge—and how they relate to one another. The focus is not on analysing from a distance, but on *working through* situations: sensing, shifting positions, and articulating what is at stake.

Alongside this, the *Empathy Compass* (see references)is introduced as a knowledge product to further unpack different perspectives within these constellations, and to reflect on one's own position as researcher within the field.

Learnings of this day include:

- Gaining insight into the relational dynamics, tensions and uncertainties within complex stakeholder settings

- Experiencing how performative and embodied methods can surface tacit or hard-to-articulate knowledge
- Reflecting on one's own position and agency within the research environment
    - Plenary reflection on the learnings, individual reflection in logbook

Literature

- Boutelier, A. & Christophe, N. (2018). *Scriptopstellingen: Een systemische blik op schrijven.* HKU Press. Zie: https://publinova.nl/product/scriptopstellingen
- Smeenk, W., Sturm, J., & Eggen, B. (2019). A Comparison of Existing Frameworks Leading to an Empathic Formation Compass for Co-design. *International Journal of Design* [Online] 13:3. Available: https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/3406
- Smeenk, W., Sturm, J., & Eggen, B. (2019). A Comparison of Existing Frameworks Leading to an Empathic Formation Compass for Co-design. *International Journal of Design* [Online] 13:3. Available: https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/3406

Day 3: 28th of May by Veerle Spronck

This last day focuses on dissemination as an integral part of the research process: not as a final step, but as a way of *generating* knowledge along the way. We explore how (preliminary) results can be shared with different audiences through *boundary objects* and other forms of knowledge products that travel across contexts. Building on the notion of the artist-researcher as a *creative boundary spanner* (see Spronck, 2024), the emphasis is on how dissemination can connect research to practice, while also transforming the research itself.

Participants will develop a dissemination approach that fits their project: not only *how* to share, but *with whom, in what form*, and *at what moment*. Through short exercises and prototyping, they sketch and plan a dissemination format that is already part of their ongoing research process—inviting interaction, feedback, and new insights.

In preparation for the session, participants think through the practical setup of their dissemination approach (timing, format, materials).

Learnings of this day include:

- Understanding dissemination as a generative and iterative part of the research process
- Exploring boundary objects and knowledge products as ways to connect research and practice
- Designing a dissemination approach that both shares and actively produces knowledge
- Translating these insights into their own research trajectory and dialogue with supervisors

Literature

- Spronck, V. (2024). Nieuwe contexten en nieuwe competenties: De kunstenaar als 'creative boundary spanner'. *Kunstzone,* 2024 (4), 8-11. Zie: https://publinova.nl/product/nieuwe-contexten-en-competenties-de-kunstenaar-als-creative-boundary-spanner
- Van Turnhout, K., Andriessen, D., Losse, M. & Smeenk, W. (2026). *Kennisproducten uit praktijkgericht onderzoek.* Boom Uitgevers Amsterdam.

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Final assignment

The final assignment consists of a short written reflection (max. 2 A4) that brings together the main learnings from the module and translates these into the participant's own research practice.

In this reflection, participants:

- articulate what they have learned about working in complex research environments
- reflect on how these insights inform their role, position and approach as a PD-researcher
- outline a concrete dissemination approach (e.g. boundary object or knowledge product) that is already part of their ongoing project

The assignment is intended as a working document that can be shared and discussed with supervisors, and used to inform next steps in the research trajectory

Tutors:

The course is facilitated by two researchers from the PD Arts & Creative:

Dr. Veerle Spronck, Associate Lector Valuable Entrepreneurship in and through the Arts, Hogeschool der Kunsten Utrecht
https://www.hku.nl/onderzoek-en-innovatie/onderzoek/lectoraten/creatieve-maakprocessen-en-ondernemerschap/veerle-spronck

Dr.ir. Wina Smeenk, Lector Societal Impact Design, Chair Expertisenetwork Systemic Co-design (ESC), a SIA sprong group, Hogeschool InHolland, Amsterdam
https://www.inholland.nl/contacten/onderzoek-wina-smeenk/