

The Research Associates of the Design Academy Eindhoven build bridges in the different CRISP projects between the academic world and practice. In their creative collaborative academic journeys they are developing a new way of working and communicating results.



COMBINING ACADEMIA & INDUSTRY

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Both the results of our work and how we work together is innovative. Almost two years into CRISP, half way on a journey with more than 60 organisations, what we might achieve is becoming clear.



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Outcomes include exciting pilot projects, unusual collaborations and new knowledge, all things you would expect a high-profile innovation programme to deliver. But there is also something else we have started to explore and prototype: where is the most exciting stuff happening, and, how can that be nurtured and leveraged?

One challenge is that consortium collaborations between academia and industry are often deemed difficult. The familiar stereotype suggests a disconnect between 'slow' academia and 'fast' industry. Or: academia focuses on knowledge creation and industry focuses on earning money. Although there is some truth in these stereotypes, why wouldn't we use these differences to our advantage? Why get bogged down by them? Aren't we all generally people who appreciate the differences and the opportunities they offer?

Innovation programmes' best results are created by industry and academia together. (Creative) industries take the lead in real life, and often do so intuitively as an integral part of a project. This works well because the innovation is contextualised with and for the people who will actually use the results: employees and customers or citizens. The real world environment, however, rarely allows for the kind of extensive reflection that would broaden the use of an innovative approach or result. The next project is often already knocking on the door. As a result, the innovative knowledge created remains hidden in the heads of the people involved.

This knowledge should fly! This is where the CRISP community can build on the unique skills and strengths of academics. Academic design researchers can take the work of the pioneers through a few more iterations. They can thoroughly reflect on what has been done and explore further, looking for a way to express the knowledge that is inside the work of the industry pioneers. This is, however, by no means a step-1-step-2 process; the two efforts should be intertwined and not in some 'nifty' project management way but through a com-

munity endeavour. In addition, to make the knowledge accessible to (creative) industry, it also needs to be communicated in ways that fit everyday industry practices and engages the creative spirits involved. The format of academic papers and journals, although essential for academics to build their reputation in academia, simply won't do. This doesn't mean that the knowledge needs to be dumbed down, it just needs to be more engaging: for instance, through workshops in which designers from academia and industry alike can do something with that knowledge.

The key to achieving these symbiotic collaborations lies not only in our work's innovative results, but also in how we work. At Design Academy Eindhoven, we have achieved this by setting up an entirely new design research group for CRISP, partly built on the idea of benefitting from differences between academia and creative industries. The academy participates in six of the total of eight CRISP projects with Research Associates, a new academic role in Dutch innovation programmes. The Research Associates are all professional designers who have graduated, often several years ago, from Design Academy Eindhoven and work on CRISP projects part-time in addition to running their own studio. As such, they have one leg in academia and one in the creative industries, while collaborating with both. It might not be an easy position, but it is definitely one that helps explore, understand, and prototype new ways of working together as industry and academia in innovation programmes. Look, for instance, at the work of Johnny Wray, who built a speculative eavesdropper for airline passengers and crew as a result of exploring new interactions between them in an academic paper. Or Susana Cámara Leret's efforts to design 'smell webs' together with a creative fragrance company and care organisation to address addictions, whilst reflecting on the strengths of, as a designer, being in between so much expertise. These creative, collaborative academic journeys will help us all to figure out how to reach the common goal of the CRISP community: strengthen the economy and society by making them more creative.

INNOVATIVE
KNOWLEDGE
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