Dr Julia von Thienen

Univ-Professor of Design Thinking Research and Neurodesign
German University of Digital Science (German UDS)

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Profile

Internationally recognised researcher, educator, and innovator at the intersection of design thinking, neurodesign, and digital engineering. Combines deep expertise in creativity, collaboration, and innovation with a strong record of interdisciplinary projects linking neuro-psychology, design, and technology. Brings extensive experience in developing methodologies, tools, and curricula to enhance communication, empathy, and problem-solving in complex digital contexts.

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Current Academic Role

• Professor of Design Thinking Research and Neurodesign, German University of Digital Science (since 2025).

• Leads teaching and research in creativity science, innovation processes, and life-centred design for digital transformation.

• UDS Project Lead for EU-funded Digital4Security and Digital4Business.

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Selected Previous Positions

• Head of Strategic Innovation, German University of Digital Science (2024–2025): co-developer of institutional design thinking strategy; co-host of the First International Conference on Digital Science in Culture.

• Senior Researcher, Hasso-Plattner-Institut (HPI), University of Potsdam, Digital Engineering Faculty (2019–2024): Founded and led the Neurodesign Research Group, pioneering an international research field uniting neuro-psychology, digital engineering, and design thinking innovation. Contributed in the MIT-HPI Designing for Sustainability Programme (2023-2024) in the Telesymbiosis project.

• Researcher, HPI (2008–2019): Core member of the Stanford-Potsdam Design Thinking Research Programme (2008–2022), contributing to global research on the scientific foundations and mechanisms of design thinking.

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Education

• PhD – Free University of Berlin, 2010, "Levels of Causality: A Methodological Analysis of Causal Research in Psychology"

• Diploma – Free University of Berlin, 2005, psychology with specialisation tracks neuroscience and computer science

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Research Expertise

• Design Thinking: Creativity, Collaboration, Innovation

• Neurodesign and creativity measurement

• Communication design in digital and cybersecurity contexts

• Human-computer interaction, empathy, and collaboration in virtual environments

• Needs-based innovation and sustainable design

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Selected Teaching Experience

• Design Thinking for Digital Engineering (HPI)

• Neurodesign Lectures (physiological perspectives, AI and innovation, neuro-psychology of design)

• Sonic Thinking and Visual Thinking modules

• Research methodology and scientific theory courses

• Master's and PhD thesis supervision in digital engineering and design thinking

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Selected Publications

Author or co-author of numerous peer-reviewed books, chapters, and articles, including contributions to Design Thinking Research (Springer), Handbook of Research on Creative Problem-Solving Skill Development in Higher Education (IGI Global), and Frontiers in Psychology.

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Professional Services

• Board Member, Berlin Scientific Society

• Chairwoman, Erhard Höpfner Foundation

• Member and Speaker of the German UDS University Council