



Design Creates the Future

By affecting people's values and behaviour designers influence the society of the future, says Peter Gall Krogh, the recently appointed professor of design at the Aarhus School of Architecture. He points to the knowledge in design research about the cultural context in which design is created and has to operate, describing it as a key condition for the ability of the design discipline to enrich societies and businesses with future-oriented products and services.

By Hans Emborg Bünemann

Design can affect future societies by effecting changes in our habits. Design research uncovers and analyses the values behind our habits and thus produces knowledge that is crucial for designers and for businesses in general. To Peter Gall Krogh, recently appointed professor of design at the Aarhus School of Architecture, this understanding of design as a change-oriented discipline is a cardinal point.

"Designers are focused on the future. They design products and services in order to change what exists today," Peter Gall Krogh explains. "Hence, they need to understand how culture and individuals go about adopting change, and that is exactly the knowledge that is offered by design research."

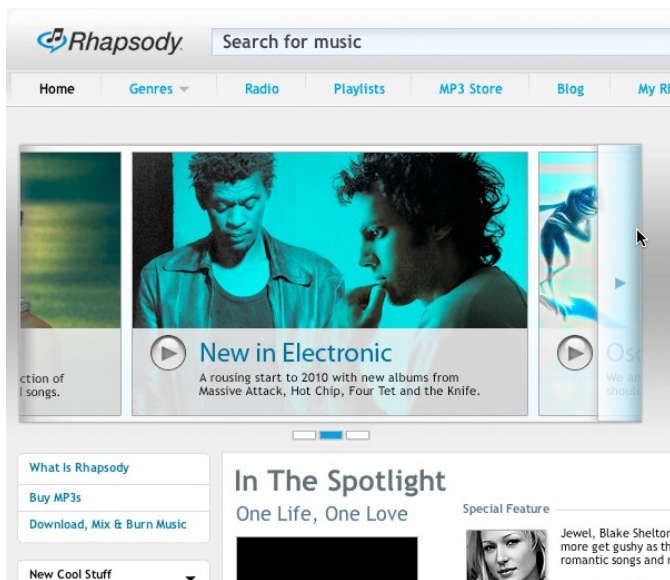
Interdisciplinary Understanding of the Present

Peter Gall Krogh, who took up his new position in January 2010, design research offers the profound cultural, technical and social understanding of the present that enables designers to create the future-oriented solutions that society needs. Design researchers draw on the analytical approach of the humanities and the social sciences and on the knowledge about measurability and construction offered by the technical sciences.

"That is why the other scientific fields view design research as interdisciplinary," says Peter Gall Krogh. "In our own understanding design research is a field in its own right, even though it's still relatively immature. But it's interesting to see how our field is attracting increasing attention from researchers from other research areas. They see something they recognise, but they also see elements that lie outside their traditional scientific methods. They are becoming aware of the perspectives in the holistic world view in design research."

Research Preserves Knowledge

Thanks to design research the old practice-based knowledge of the design discipline is beginning to appear in a scientific format, that is, written down and documented so that it can be shared and developed across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. In the future, design researchers will publish increasingly frequently in the journals of other disciplines, Peter Gall Krogh predicts. In his own professorship he is tasked with developing interdisciplinary networks with other research environments.



Music is becoming a service to which we have access without the need for material ownership. Music services TDC play and Rhapsody both exemplify this. Source: www.rhapsody.com.

“The interdisciplinary collaboration is about becoming more aware of other people’s challenges. When we do this respectfully and with an open mind, we can identify common challenges. We live in a changing world with challenges that don’t adhere to narrow disciplinary boundaries,” he says, adding that design researchers must gradually get used to the idea that in some areas they are the ones who are the most experienced. This is not just the case in interdisciplinary research work but also in working with businesses. Here, according to Peter Gall Krogh, the knowledge from design research can help develop the potential of services.

Affecting Values

Regardless whether the goal is to reduce people’s energy consumption, improve procedures in a hospital ward or promote exercise and fitness, Peter Gall Krogh says that the key issue is affecting behaviour. The potential of design as a change-oriented discipline is strengthened by design researchers’ analyses of the cultural context in which design is created and has to operate, he says. Thus, design can affirm as well as transform values.

“Take housing as an example. Designing houses based on the familiar concept of the one-family home affirms existing values

about life styles and social interaction. Designing other ways of living – say, communal dwellings – and communicating this concept, so that people see the benefits of living in communal settings, would encourage a shift in values,” Peter Gall Krogh explains.

He mentions the music business as another example that illustrates how design and the focus on services have transformed values.

“Until a few years ago, music was a product that the consumer had to own in the form of a record. But thanks to design and technology – for example software such as *TDC play* and *Rhapsody* – today, music is a service that we have access to without needing to own it in a material form. In this way, design has affected the value that has to do with our need to own things. Through the design solution we have moved from an economy of ownership to an economy of accessibility. A shift that is relevant in a number of other areas as well, for environmental, economic and logistical reasons. But it’s the design that determines whether it succeeds.”

Peter Gall Krogh explains that design research is capable of analysing the set of values that characterises the culture and society in which the development of products and services takes

Designing ways of living. Communal dwellings, where the residents eat together on a daily basis, pick up their mail and do their laundry in the main building, serve to enhance social interactions. The communal dwelling *Bakken* in Humlebæk north of Copenhagen, which consists of 25 one-family homes, a farm house with two flats and a horse stable, was designed with a village-inspired lane, an elliptical *Sydtorv* (Southern Square; below left) and a shared building with an adjacent open square (right). Photo: Jørgen Skielboe



place and of developing and describing the methods for this analytical effort. In addition, researchers are developing techniques for embedding values in products and services. Designers can use this knowledge in their efforts to change what exists and, for example, make it attractive for consumers to change their behaviour patterns. Thus, according to Peter Gall Krogh, design research provides the necessary knowledge base for product and service innovation.

Budding Research

On this background, the newly appointed professor of design at the Aarhus School of Architecture calls for more and better design research in Denmark, preferably coordinated across the research institutions.

“Over the past few years, the Danish Centre for Design Research has proved an efficient facilitator and a hub for the exchange of knowledge throughout the design research environment. In order to qualify design research and ensure that the knowledge we’re generating gets out – not least within Denmark – it’s more important than ever that we have a national centre. Some good seeds have been sown, but the little buds that are emerging right now in the form of research projects are still a little fragile. They need sun and heat to unfold their budding potential,” says Peter Gall Krogh.

He argues that both the research environment and the business sector need projects on a far bigger scale to exploit the potential in integrating the knowledge and approaches from several disciplines and thus generate solutions for the challenges of the future.

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Cover photo: Peter Gall Krogh took up his position as professor of design in January 2010.
PhotoPlotpoint Film.

DANISH CENTRE FOR DESIGN RESEARCH

The Danish Centre for Design Research DCDR comprises the design researchers at the Aarhus School of Architecture, The Danish Design School, Designskolen Kolding and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture. The DCDR aims to contribute to establishing a strong design research environment in Denmark and to strengthen the exchange of knowledge about design research and facilitate the identification of potential areas of collaboration for researchers, schools and enterprises, on a national as well as an international level.

MIND DESIGN

Mind Design, DCDR Webzine is published once a month and features articles and interviews about current Danish and international design research. Mind Design aims to present design research and research findings from researcher to researcher as well as from researchers to design practitioners in general. The webzine is free of charge. Please see www.dcdr.dk/uk/minddesign

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