



AARHUS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Call for participation

The role of Experiments in Constructive Design Research 27-30 May 2013

Social experiments, urban interventions, design games, explorations into new materials or technologies. Experiments in design research can take many forms. This PhD course will be focusing on how experiments can be used as a vehicle for knowledge production in research through design.

Theme

Research through design is increasingly used as a methodological starting point for design research – inside as well as outside the design discipline. Originally, the idea of research through design was introduced by Christopher Frayling (1993) and Bruce Archer (1995), and since then many different interpretations as to the characteristics of research through design have been presented. Today, many design researchers acknowledge that research through design is their method of choice. A more thorough study, however, reveals many differences between the different types of knowledge production which research through design may result in. Consequently, there is a need for a critical and more theoretical discussion of the concept.

Being able to differentiate research through design from artistic development work and from other types of research practices is essential. The traditional scientific process is characterised by three well-known stages: the hypothesis, the experiment, and the evaluation/reflection/communication. When seen in the light that research through design is becoming more and more influential, we need to revisit these stages and take a look at how they challenge, how they are integrated in, and how they shape the fundamental issues of design research.

This course is the second out of three courses; the other two courses are concerned with (1) the role of hypothesis in design research and its value for staging the experiment (3) the evaluation of knowledge gained through experiments in design research. We expect to offer the third course in November 2013. Please notice that the courses can be attended in any order and independently.

Focus

It is widely agreed that “the experiment” is at the heart of constructive design research (Koskinen et al., 2011). However, experiments come in many shapes and formats, and articulate numerous approaches to research interests and potential results including their relevance to science and practice.

This course focuses on the experiment as an act of developmental exploration. What is the purpose of experimentation? What are the different types of experiments used in design research; how and in what way do these experiments influence hypotheses, research questions and evaluation in a research project?

The course provides the theoretical outset, tools and techniques for framing the experiment in design research as an exploratory practice where knowledge can take many forms including text, artefacts and practices. In particular, sketching will be one of the central explanatory tools enabling us to account for the nature of experiments and the special kind of “logic” with which experiments drive a research process. The expected outcome of the course is that PhD students will have substantial material and knowledge for describing how design experiments serve as a method for inquiry in their research projects.

Participation

You can apply for participation in the course by submitting a position paper (2 pages). In this paper the participants must explain their (planned) experiments in relation to the research purpose. Please submit as a PDF-file.

Preparation

When you are accepted for participation in the course, you will receive a compendium containing excerpts from selected PhD-dissertations that reflect a great diversity – with regard to experiments in design research and the role they play in research praxis. As preparation for the course, we ask the participants to identify experiments and purposes in these dissertations. We, furthermore, ask participants to identify the ‘state of mind’ of the author.

The course includes:

- A presentation of the participants based on position papers
- A discussion and mapping of experiment-typologies
- Scientific Theory
- A day set aside for writing
- A presentation and discussion of the work of the participants during the course

Facts:

Value: 5 ECTS

Time: primary course activities will be held during week 22, 27-30 May 2013

Location: Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark

Key teachers: Thomas Markussen, Anne Louise Bang, Mie Nørgaard, Peter Gall Krogh

Cost: DKK 2,500 – Including materials, catering and two dinners during the stay. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements.

Deadline for application:

Please submit your application for participation no later than 1 April 2013, to research coordinator Hanne F. Gjelstrup, hanne.gjelstrup@aarch.dk

Notification of acceptance: 15 April 2013

Course material will be sent to the participants on 1 May 2013