

Aarhus School of Architecture // Design School Kolding // Royal Danish Academy

Strategic Design as Agile Driver in Innovating SME´s

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Publication date:
2012

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for pulished version (APA):
Ludvigsen, M., & Rasmussen, J. (2012). *Strategic Design as Agile Driver in Innovating SME´s*. Poster session presented at DMI 2012, Boston, United States.

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Strategic Design as Agile Driver in Innovating Small and Medium-sized Enterprises



Keywords and research interests: Strategic Design, Design as facilitation, Informing strategy, Research through Design
 Conference theme: DESIGN-LED INNOVATION IN BUSINESS MODELS



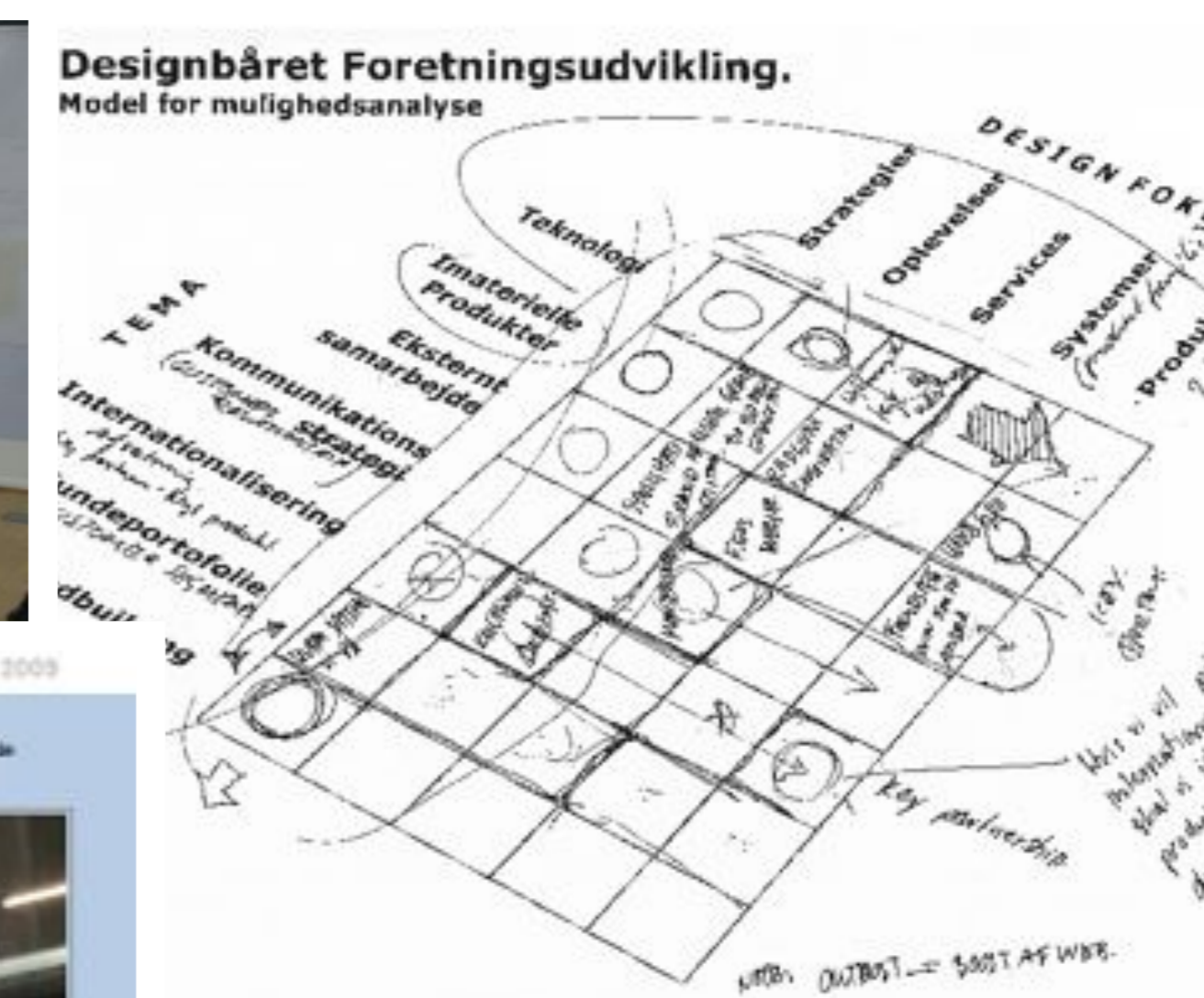
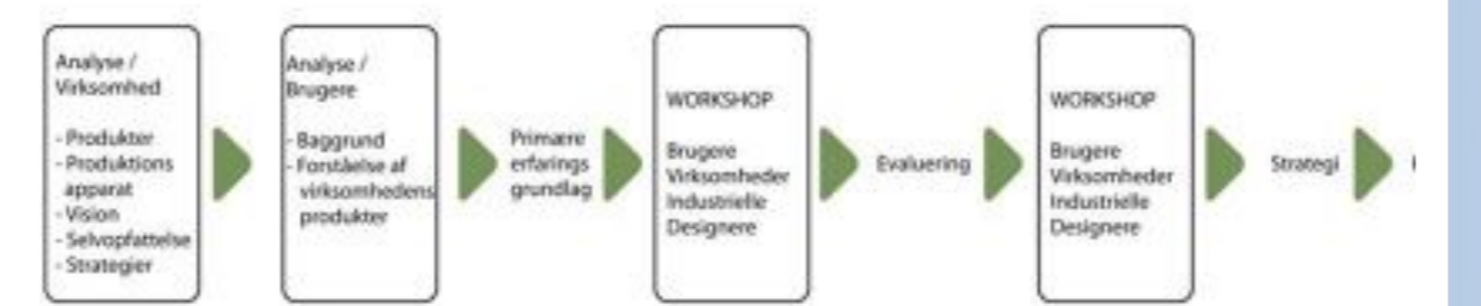
The Futorium
 12 SME's participated in an innovation project called "The Futorium – strategic experience design in SME's" that ran for a year with an extended toolbox and several workshops. Each company worked on their own challenges while being facilitated by researchers, at workshops with other companies.

Research through design

Research through design (RtD) is a constructive research approach that deals experimentally with wicked problems in a range of settings, and has been suggested as a methodological approach to conducting relevant design research (Rittel 1973, Ludvigsen 2006, Zimmerman et al. 2010). From interaction design to problems of city-planning, the active, engaged and cross-disciplinary stance of creative, constructive experimentation is seen as essential in order to elicit research findings that embrace and respects the complexity of the research context. Akin to Action Research (Argyris, 1985) this RtD approach allows access to the real complexity of business challenges, by creating responses to real needs. Research into the potential of strategic design should, in our view, be based on actual ongoing processes in live business cases in order to be relevant to a wider audience.

Experimenting with strategic design in SME's

Under the heading of organizational change, business development through design and user driven value identification, we have conducted a range of practice-based research projects engaging SME's. Most research on the topic of strategic design (e.g. Heijden, 2005, Kumar 2004) have been focused on designers working with large, global corporations, changing these organizations' view on product development or their approach to market and consumer insights. Our research is taking a design-led approach to strategy development in close collaboration with the management in the involved SME's on the foundation of existing challenges or opportunities. Research into strategic design should include participation in actual corporate context. SME's must adapt to new local and global conditions, changing consumer behavior and expectations. Where large companies have substantial resources and entire departments for supporting management with visionary thinking, SME's often find themselves in need of the same facility, but lacking the resources. Strategic design for SME's is an interesting new market for design practice as well as a productive domain for research into new strategic tools.



Dolle A/S
 During a public knowledge dissemination project where academic researchers could meet companies in need of input, we collaborated with Dolle A/S, a manufacturer of attic ladders for home installation. The strategic process extended from user, product and market research, over analysis and idea generation, to facilitation of the ongoing strategic discussion in the company over a period of several months.



LEADING INNOVATION THROUGH DESIGN
 2012 INTERNATIONAL DESIGN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE
 AUGUST 8-9 2012 - BOSTON, MA, USA



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