

# EXPERIMENTS ALL THE WAY – DIAGRAMS OF DIALECTICS BETWEEN A DESIGN RESEARCH PROGRAM AND EXPERIMENTS

METTE AGGER ERIKSEN  
K3 – ARTS & COMMUNICATION,  
MALMÖ UNIVERSITY  
METTE.AGGER@MAH.SE

ANNE LOUISE BANG  
KOLDING SCHOOL OF DESIGN  
ALB@DSKD.DK

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exemplify and argue ways in which different experiments can be at the core of a research project throughout the study. As former PhD scholars, with design backgrounds, both of us were engaged in the XLab project (2006), proposing a programmatic approach to experimental design research. This paper reflects our experiences of adapting this approach in PhD studies. Furthermore it exemplifies, discusses, and adds to the understanding of different experiments during a design research (PhD) process. In the paper, we also reprint our two modifications of the original XLab ‘working diagram’ and discuss rationales for adapting this as a part of the research process.

## INTRODUCTION

Since Frayling (1993) coined the term ‘research through art and design’, many have been addressing and exemplifying ways in which design examples and practice can contribute to the field of design research. Today it is commonly acknowledged that very often

and generates a different knowledge (ibid).

To investigate this area of design research, in 2006 the Danish Centre of Design Research hosted the ‘XLab’ meta-project which included a series of three hands-on and reflective workshops: ‘Beginnings’, ‘Per:form’, and ‘Intersections’ (see Brandt et al. 2011). As PhD scholars at that time, both of us were engaged – one of us in the core team, the other as an active workshop participant. Inspired by Frayling, Schön, and others, XLab explored and proposed a programmatic approach to design research with experiments at the core of the research projects (ibid; Binder & Redström 2006; Brandt & Binder 2007). This main argument was condensed into a working diagram, which is further explained below (for other discussions about the diagram see also Bang 2010; Bang et al. 2012; Eriksen 2012; Markussen et al. 2012).

This paper aims to add to the above mentioned body of work in terms of discussing and understanding different experiments in design research and in terms of adapting existing diagrams and views to fit one’s research.

First, we introduce the original XLab working diagram. Then we discuss different selected experiments and how they intertwine with our adaptations of the diagram. The XLab workshop titles are used as a reflective layer structuring the discussions and reflections also relating to Schön’s classic (1983) and Gaver’s recent (2012) views of experiments. We end the paper by reprinting our modifications and discussing rationales for how we both identified a need to modify the working diagram.