# Abstract

*Rhetorical Design Studies: The Art of Making Design Choices Explicit*

*PhD Dissertation by Per Liljenberg Halstrøm at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design.*

Design has the potential to affect the situations we are in, the choices we make and the beliefs we live by. Being such an affective field, one might expect that canonized design thinking models and methods would be much concerned with how designers can discover arguments for their design choices. However, these are predominantly concerned with the phases to go through in a design process and the steps to take rather than informing design practitioners of how to explore their arguments of *why*.

Concepts and theories from rhetoric are employed here to explain how designers can develop a process where questions of not only *how*, *what* and *when* are explored, but also a thorough investigation of ‘why’. Significant examples from both design students and design professionals are investigated through a rhetorical hermeneutical approach, which leads to the development of a rhetorical framework for design.

The conclusion is that a design process of deliberation can be divided into three areas, drawing on theories and concepts from rhetorical epideictic topoi, amplification of arguments, and constitutive rhetoric, respectively. Together, these three areas define a Topos-

Driven Model for deliberating about design choices, which is concerned with not only the making of things but with affecting of situations, actions and systems. In area *one*, the designers reframe the problem by means of epideictic topoi—meaning that they look for values to celebrate. This leads to deliberation about values to praise in the situations they intend to address by design rather than first and foremost thinking of a problem to solve. In area *two*, the designers look through the available means of amplification. The purpose of this is to discover ideas for making the design solution as persuasive as possible. In area *three*, the designers analyze the inherent ideology of their design solution.

Moving through these three areas leads to a design process of deliberation and self-deliberation on the available means of persuasion in the given situations. Furthermore, it leads designers to being not only concerned with designing persuasive products but also with reflecting on the inherent ideology of their designs, how it might affect people’s beliefs, and whether they can justify this.