Architect, catalyst, advocate, and prophet: A Four-lens view of companies to support ecodesign integration

Companies are increasingly expected to develop products with better environmental performance throughout their life cycle. Academic literature on ecodesign integration, which investigates firms’ practices of dealing with environmental concerns associated with their products, indicates a need for more focus on formal and informal organizational aspects. From the general management literature, the four-lens view of organizations provides a rich understanding of organizations by embracing their formal (structural lens) and informal (human, political and symbolic lenses) functioning. This article aims to explore the extent to which the four-lens view may support ecodesign integration in companies. This exploratory study builds on fifteen interviews about ecodesign integration at seven manufacturing companies in Denmark and Norway. The main results are threefold: (i) the different lenses of organizations could be found in measures mentioned at the case companies; (ii) measures from the architect’s perspective seemed necessary to provide an official scene for ecodesign and help prioritizing it in organizations; and (iii) the catalyst’s, advocate’s, and prophet’s perspectives seemed necessary to facilitate or complement the architect’s perspective. In the light of these findings, the four-lens view seems relevant to strengthen ecodesign integration, and its potential use as a reflective tool is an avenue for future work.

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