manifesto

THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN THE 21st CENTURY

Success does not happen by accident, it happens by design.

Gordon Brown, Prime Minister, UK

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THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN THE 21st CENTURY

DANISH DESIGNERS' MANIFESTO:
A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF DANISH DESIGN

Danish Designers is a professional hub for approximately 900 individual members, working professionally with design. Our mission is to promote the most intelligent use – as well as the understanding of the true value – of design and of the thinking, skills and capacities of Danish designers. We do this through a palette of services, addressing the personal, professional and political needs and interests of our members.

PERSONAL identity
• Career counselling
• Mentoring
• Design professional platforms
• Collegial support
• Visibility through printed and digital media
• Recognition through the right to use mDD
• Updated knowledge and information
• Security through dedicated insurance programmes

PROFESSIONAL development
• Business development counselling
• Legal counselling
• Collegial support
• Contractual support
• Strategic advice
• Professional identity
• Educational programmes, professional workshops, symposia and seminars
• National and international network
• Professional matchmaking
• Contact to possible clients
• Updated knowledge and information
• Participation in cross–disciplinary projects

POLITICAL influence
• Promotion of the competences and potential of design and professional designers
• Representation in public and political working groups, committees and boards
• Active participation and presence in relevant political debates
• Unified voice in public hearings
• Continuous contact to relevant organizations, political environments and media
• Active in research and educational communities
• Representation in design communities and relevant bodies in Scandinavia, Europe and globally

Danish Designers has existed in its present form as a multi–disciplinary and inclusive community of professionals since the establishment in 1995. However, the roots of the organization can be traced back to the late forties.

Design for "people, profit and planet"

The "triple bottom line" concept was introduced at the turn of the century by the UK based consultancy firm SustainAbility. A growing number of corporations worldwide have adopted the concept as a natural consequence of both legislative and market driven demands for transparency with regard to their environmental and social commitments. In fact, it is expected by responsible companies that they take their social and environmental bottom line as seriously as they have always done with regard to their financial bottom line.

Already in 1987, the Brundtland commission stated that the economic, social and environmental development needed to be balanced, sending a crystal clear signal that economic growth is only responsible if it "meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". At the same time, the commission pointed out that a sustainable development also implies that concerns for nature do not threaten people's living conditions or undermine a responsible, economic development. In other words, sustainable development calls for constant balance between the three factors reflected in the triple bottom line; social responsibility, financial feasibility and the well–being of the natural environment; between "people, profit and planet".

When we have decided to link design to "people, profit and planet" as a fundamental prerequisite for all our dispositions and a platform for our communication, it is based on the assumption that the very core of design and the role of the designer is – in every single phase of a project and in every respect – to make the best possible choice between the alternatives at hand, balancing often contradictory interests, but also profiting from this tension in the endeavours of creating true innovation.

The objective of design has always been attractiveness and novelty – and about balancing the numerous options a development process offers. In a historical perspective the design process has most often had an artefact or another physical output as its outcome – either as industrially manufactured products, various forms of communicative solutions or optimization of dedicated, physical environments. In any case, the needs of the user, functionality and sensual appeal – in combination with creative exploitation of the inherent qualities of the material itself – have always been the

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fundamental parameters of design activity, and always with the ambition of breaking boundaries as a driving force.

Today design is still about innovating within the same parameters and driven by the same ambition, but applied to a much broader spectre of challenges, where the designer is part of a value chain where innovation – that reaches far beyond material outcomes – is addressed by multi–disciplinary teams. Thus the role of the designer has increasingly become that of facilitating qualified choices by individuals, enterprises or society between real and more sustainable alternatives than current ones – rather that creating more of what's already there.

Design is all about attractiveness, sensuality, aesthetics and functionality, about real people and real problems, about individuals and their encounters with systems, about encouraging responsible behaviour and choices, about challenging our prejudice, about fellowship and ownership, commonality of reference and cultural diversity, about expressing identities – for the individual, for groups of individuals, for corporate entities and for societies at large; design is all about "people, profit and planet".

Let us discuss what design can do – rather than what design is

For decades – in Denmark as well as in most other parts of the world – an amazing number of people have occupied themselves with what has always seemed like a key question; what is design? We are not in any way diminishing the importance of these endeavours as means of articulating and communicating – thus creating awareness and understanding of – the value of design. The result is greater understanding of design issues both in the industry, in the political as well as the public domain. However, as design has changed its character and meaning over the past decades, having been continuously qualified by new add–ons, one must assume that the same will be the case for the decades to come.

Thus, our suggestion is that a more meaningful approach could be what design has already and actually contributed with, what it currently brings to the table of new solutions and which role one could expect design to play in the future – to the extent, of course, that any one of us has the right to predict tomorrow. Design does make a difference to artefacts and enhances physical objects. So far so good; no–one seems to

contest design's ability to beautify, simplify and add meaning to a product, adding value throughout the value chain from manufacturing through sales and distribution to the user – in the word's most inclusive sense. The examples are many and well known. Our affluent lives are full of well designed products like furniture and light fixtures, kitchenware and home electronics, clothes and accessories, cars, park benches, milk cartons. They all seem inevitable either because of the functions they fulfil or because they fulfil other, more subtle needs in our everyday lives.

Material design contributes to define our lives and our identities. The objects we choose to make part of our work or play, homes or communities influence on our perception of quality of life, but they also help us to understand and master well–known as well as unexpected challenges in our daily lives.

Material design might be of even greater importance outside of our private sphere, even though not all of us will necessarily be confronted with it or take advantage of it directly. Such design could be applied to products dedicated to special user groups, such as assistive technologies for disabled people, medical equipment, gauges or CNC machines, lifts or drilling equipment, feeding robots for animals or cabin interiors for military helicopters. Actually, a product category, financial transaction or professional service where material design does not already play a significant role, seems almost unthinkable, as it influences on the quality and durability, functionality and usability of every single object being part of the delivery or value chain – from choice of materials and construction through manufacturing processes and assembly to distribution, sales, usage and disposal. More and more often, it doesn't even stop there, as the adaptability of the disposed product to another value chain plays an increasingly important role.

However – just like design adds value to material products by making it more precious, more relevant or more competitive, design adds value by means of the same enhancement to immaterial deliveries such as private or public services, client relations or business transactions. By enhancing the interaction between the supplier of a service and you as the consumer of that service, design strengthens the relation, influences on your preferences and changes both yours and the supplier's behaviour – either in correlation with the way the physical space or the user interface – in which the transaction

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takes place – have been designed, but often simply by offering a better experience within already existing parameters.

Design can be applied to an artefact or a specific solution to a specific challenge, but it can also be applied to a context – be it a physical space or environment or a configuration. If the context is physical in the form of a room or a built structure, the design will often be labelled architecture, interior architecture or environmental design. By organizing space through objects, light and sound, activities and objectives – applying the same parameters as earlier described – not only the space, but also the relations and experiences for which the space is dedicated, are designed, which adds value to the transactions in question, as if it were an object or a service.

   Obviously environmental designers are able to add lots of value to private spaces like our homes or the CEO's office. But the real and vastly untapped potential of interior architecture and design lies in more public spaces, where transparency and legibility, light, sound and colours become a question of safety and security, treatment and care, health, life and death, such as for example work environments and institutions for education and care. The same goes for spaces – or rooms – that are not even considered as such by many, because they are out in the open; the design of streets and squares, courts and yards. To design the environments in which people work or play, make decisions or philosophize, celebrate or mourn is at least as important a role for design as any of the previously described categories.

Design also determines the way we communicate with each other – as individual to individual and system to system, system to individual and individual to system. In this context, "system" might represent public authorities of any kind, but also companies, organizations or movements. One of the most conspicuous examples of such communication design is the way companies through "branding" and identity design try to convince consumers to choose their product or service instead of a competitor's – both through media exposure prior to the transaction, at the point of transaction through packaging and both the physical and relational point of sales design.

   Along the same principles public authorities use communication design extensively in their dialogue with enterprises and individuals through everything from flyers and reports to web–portals and self–service–systems. Other examples of communication design come from the ways with which we search and share knowledge in our modern age with Google and Wikipedia as pioneers, but also how our ways of communication with each other changes rapidly as new user interfaces and social media are made available to us – such as skype, facebook and twitter. In the physical world wayfinding design enables us to find our way in complex and often unknown environments. One might say that the need for communication design and design that communicates – to facilitate all the deliberations we all have to engage in on a daily basis – increases constantly as does the complexity of our lives and our environments.

Until now, design has primarily been related to the aforementioned areas; physical objects – and to an increasing degree services, physical environments and communication. Including all the subordinate categories that, for a number of good reasons, will not be specifically dealt with in this publication. The domain currently being conquered by design, however, is the more subtle and rather intangible; how do we reach the goals we set? Some call it strategic design, others call it concept design while others again prefer the concept of "design thinking". Irrespective of terminology, it covers the theory that design is a highly relevant approach to dealing with challenges, which does not necessarily call for a physical object, a specific service, a dedicated environment or a new communicative tool to be addressed and solved. Design has moved out of the domain in which a delivery is most often a tangible answer to a brief and into a domain, where design is seen as a valid resource where large, complex challenges are at stake, and where the designer works in close and equivalent collaboration with all kinds of other professional disciplines. Such challenges could be efficiency or profitability related – most probably on long term, or it could be related to local, regional or national identity or external relations, to loyalty issues and internal relations in large corporations, to competitiveness and innovation capacity, democratic processes and engagement, cross–sectorial dialogue and diversity issues. Not to forget the probably most urgent of all challenges: the need for a more sustainable corporate and political development and for a more responsible and balanced global order.

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This rather radical change and enlarge-ment of design as a concept and profes-sion – which is inevitable – calls for cautious guardianship of design's original meaning and its meaningfulness for the individual. Design as the key to better solutions to your own specific problem, design as the door to experiences that move you and activate your senses, design as means to improve every–day life, to simplify what doesn't need to be complicated and to make the inaccessible accessible. Design as a way of making it easier for every one of us to understand and to relate to the world and the local environ-ment we are part of.

Overview and terminology

We already described how Danish Design-ers currently see design as a concept and a profession; as a vital tool to increase corpo-rate, national and regional competitiveness – "design for profit", as a significant factor in terms of influencing people's lives through the products and services, spaces and envi–ronments, relations and experiences that shape our everyday – "design for people" and as a pivotal resource with regard to promoting more sustainable products and services through the choice of materials and processes with consequences for sourc-ing, manufacturing, use and disposal – in addition to the power of design in terms of promoting responsible choices through consumption and behaviour – "design for planet".

In this chapter, we will elaborate on how we believe that design can actually play an important role with regard to each one of the three levels.

Moreover, and to link our views to the political agenda, we will describe and com-ment on each one of the three pillars on which most design policies are built; design research and education, design support and design promotion. Finally, we will advance our own views on how design political initia-tives within each domain realistically could further design's potential vis–a–vis some of the challenges it is expected to address in a not so distant future.

Design for profit

Design's significance as regarding the strengthening of the competitive capacities within the corporate environment is today rarely questioned. In particular during the last five–six years, a number of surveys have been made – first in Europe, then followed by the US and several Asian countries – examining the direct correlation between corporations' use of design and their per-formance measured in growth in revenue and profitability as well as in their ability to attract and retain qualified staff and finally in terms of corporate image and brand value. All of the reports presented until date show the same results. Design used strate-gically improves the overall performance of companies.

Growth is fairly easily measured. All the other benefits from using design and work-ing with designers, however, might be rather more complicated to assess and document. Notably the effects deriving from improved efficiency, process optimization and qualita-tive improvements may be difficult to prove as deriving directly from the use of design. This problem is accentuated when examin-ing public institutions and enterprises, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and cultural institutions as well as corporations within certain sectors with extremely long development cycles, such as the medical industry. Notwithstanding, we dare to make the claim that even within those forms of competitive environments, design contribut-es significantly to the overall performance.

We already discussed that design is a source of attractiveness and meaningful relations. Both are crucial elements in the pursuit of attracting new "clients" as well as in retaining existing ones – no matter whether they are actually customers as such or they are members, volunteers, satisfied citizens or applicants for vacant jobs.

Design revolves around newness and is about identifying and accommodating hith-erto unmet needs. Private enterprises – re-gardless of whether their market is made up of consumers or professional entities – are measured by their ability to innovate and on whether they are perceived as leaders of the pack or as followers and copycats.

Design is about smartness – however, in the positive sense of the word. About doing things in smarter ways, choosing materials and processes more intelligently, harvest-ing more from already existing material and human resources and minimizing capital in-vestments through procedural and relational substitution, rather than new hardware and new staff. In other words, design is – also – about saving both time, money and human resources.

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clients and users and through disclosing and exploiting resources that are already present in the organization and among existing stakeholders. Not only does this contribute to savings and improved efficiency. The work environment also benefits from it through more loyal and more dedicated employees – thus also the ability to attract more talented and qualified employees.

Finally, design is about communication – about understanding and harnessing a company's identity, its history and its message to a defined audience. Design helps corporations, organizations and public bodies – even nations – to increase their brand value by communicating their values and ideas, their social responsibility and commitment or their intentions to enter into commercial, social or cultural relations. Verbally as well as visually – in any conceivable format, and in virtual as well as in real life environments.

Design for people

Design has always started with the aspirations and dreams of the individual, its acknowledged as well as unarticulated needs – long before concepts like user-driven innovation and user-centered design were introduced. Notwithstanding the fact that design not always had positive effects on the user or humankind as such, that the designer had envisaged or intended.

Design fundamentally builds on an analysis of what could possibly be done to improve the perceived quality of any given situation. Approached in a design methodological manner, the analysis will lead to a number of alternative scenarios – all of which represent an improvement compared to the present. The ultimate choice will most often reflect conscious deliberations of different and often contradictory concerns. The most immediate and intuitive adoption of any solution, however, seems to occur when human factor interests are given the same weight and priority as the economical, and for a number of good reasons.

Design respects the sensual sensitivity of the user. Not only the visual, but rather the combined – and rarely rational – sensual reaction triggered by the experience. If the solution resonates aesthetically with the user, it will automatically be perceived as relevant, thus somehow appeal to any one out of numerous forms of engagement. In the case of a physical object, it might incite usage or merely visual or tactile enjoyment. A well designed service or relation invites the user into active engagement, while

well designed – most often visual – communication is more easily and immediately understood – increasing the probability of the user actually relating to the message communicated.

Design is also a means of promoting involvement, inclusion and coherence by offering access to products and services that are often – and rightly so – perceived exclusive and prohibited by many because of their physical or mental impairment, or simply because they are different from the vast majority. Sometimes product or services need to be designed specifically to such – often marginal – groups, but more often than we think, a more inclusive approach to designing products and services – taking into consideration the needs of both able–bodied and disabled users in the development process would benefit all. This concept and methodology – often called Design-For-All or Universal Design – is fortunately being adopted by more and more sectors and product and service categories, not least because such demands of inclusion are currently being fronted by The European Council and are also articulated specifically in UN's Convention on the rights of people with disabilities.

Irrespective of whether one is disabled or not, the challenges we all face on a daily basis tend to appear increasingly complex to most of us – even complicated. However, as design and designers have clearly contributed to this it seems quite probable that they are also able to offer a reverse contribution; to simplify and to make things more comprehendible and accessible. By removing the superfluous and focusing on the essential or by making everyday choices easier and better informed – not by fewer or more, but by better and more instinctively legible alternatives – be it with regard to tangible products or environments or to the services, relations and communication we rely upon.

A quite new approach to the exploitation of design's potential has materialized in a row of projects, often referred to as service design. This concept covers design of services in general – private as well as public. The private services have already been discussed in a previous chapter, as have the measurable effects in terms of savings and effectiveness in the public sector. Another – more subtle, but equally important effect within the public sector, however, is the reduction or elimination of barriers between the individual citizen and the system that design has proved to offer. Confidence and tolerance are fundamental preconditions

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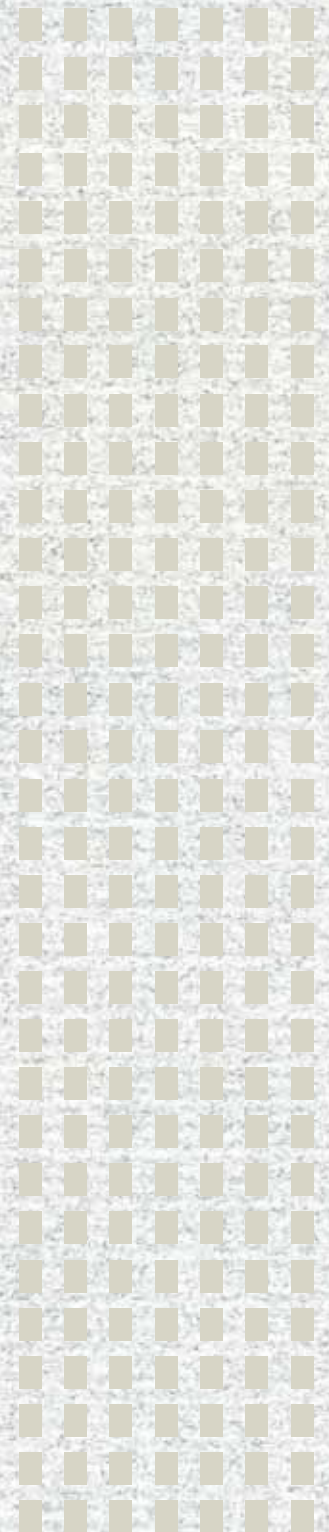
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for a meaningful dialogue between the two parties – achieved through adding familiarity and relevance, by involving the user in the development or customization of the service and by creating a physical and communicative environment, which resonates with the user's feeling of comfort. All of which are key elements in the design approach.

Knowledge of design and the ability to evaluate any given product, service or message is important to build an understanding of space and the objects we are surrounded by as well as the information and the experiences we are subjected to. Understanding the intentions behind any given solution is crucial in order to decipher the codes and signals embedded in the solution – enabling us to make better and more informed choices. Confidence in the products and services we meet as consumers and in man–made environments leads to self–confidence through a better understanding of our own identities and a more conscious relation to our experiences and our choices. Thus a fundamental understanding of design is a vital element in any human being's breeding.

Design for planet

Most people seem to agree that the greatest challenges facing us are linked to the very survival of the earth. Global warming is the most conspicuous and currently the most controversial development, but other problems are – either on a global scale or in parts of the world – equally gigantic. The lack of access to clean water is threatening the subsistence of millions of people. The emission of various gases not only damages the ozone layer but also damages the health and well–being of animals and human beings. For the latter the quality of life is at stake while for the remaining population of the earth the consequences are often seen through the extinction of entire species. Current reproduction prognoses point at a net growth of the world's human population of approximately 50 percent – all of which will fight with the rest of us for already scarce natural resources. Just to mention a few of the realities that we face.

Design and designers can neither save the planet nor humanity on their own. However, design and designers can make a significant difference and contribute to a development that matches the more optimistic rather than the most depressive scenarios being discussed globally.

Design is in its most basic form about making one alternative more attractive than another; a responsible choice more attractive than a less responsible one. As the future of the planet cannot be secured through technological innovation only, one of the roles of design will be to define the needs and aspirations that future technologies should fulfil. Many emerging economies face a historical choice. Should their people have the right to experience the same material growth as the western world and thereby perpetuate our pressure on the earth; far beyond the tolerance of the planet despite modern environmental techcnologies and other good forces? Or should we concentrate on providing better alternatives by designing products and services, urban and rural communities, physical and virtual infrastructures and visions of what a good life is that are compatible with the planet's ability to cope? The same questions, by the way, are at least as relevant to ask in our own part of the world.

Not all designers can or should address such major, global issues. But no designers can excuse themselves from taking responsibility. All designers have an influence on the future of the earth through their work, and they can all work towards more sustainable solutions and to optimize the products, services or environments they work with within the limitations of the task at hand.

Conscious endeavours at decreasing the complexity of a product will most often improve the chances of recycling – at the same time as it will most likely mean less raw materials and lower energy consumption in the manufacturing phase. The contribution of design in terms of new innovative solutions, better material choices and smarter manufacturing processes often set new standards within product categories or with regard to how we solve any given problem. As such, design – in close and fruitful collaboration with technological innovation – helps substituting harmful processes and materials. Good examples are found within such areas as fixtures for light and electricity, water, heat and light.

One important factor for mores sustain–able production is the choice of materials and suppliers. In a globalized world, an increasing part of the actual manufacturing takes place in poor countries. Thus, a meticulous choice of suppliers and demands of both environmentally and socially responsible behaviour could influence hugely on as different parameters as the living conditions of the workers and their families and the overall environmental consequences. More than three out of four decisions directly influencing on the final choice of

materials and manufacturing processes are made in the design phase. Another relevant issue therefore is whether one can justify a material or component to be transported by plane or container halfway around the world if alternatives of equal quality and of local origin are available. Fundamentally speaking, sustainable design solutions are about making informed choices where concerns for the planet carry equal weight to concerns for the user and the bottom line of the client for whom the design is developed.

At the end of the day, the most important role of design today is to ensure that the most responsible solution – whether design driven or driven by technology – is also perceived by the client and the user as the most attractive. One of the most effective ways of achieving this is to create products that are more meaningful to the individual and that are kept and cherished rather than being disposed of and replaced long before their functional lifetime has come to an end. Moreover: to help individuals making responsible choices in their daily lives – based on knowledge and on desire rather than on fear and regulations. And finally – as designers have always done – to create a movement, but this time around a movement where concern for our common future and responsible choices become the most important parameters for those who want to be seen as pioneers.

As already mentioned, most design policies are built upon three pillars; design education and research, design support and design promotion. In the following, we will discuss how each one – in particular and in combination – can contribute to profiting even more from design's potential in relation to the challenges already listed.
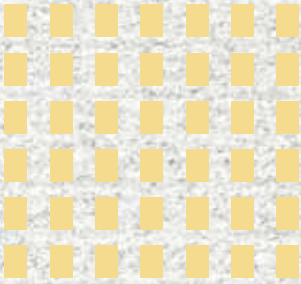
Design research & education

A basic assumption in order for design to be taken seriously as a profession and as a relevant methodology vis-a-vis commercial, social and cultural, as well as the complex global and systemic challenges we face is the existence of sufficient scientifically valid knowledge about the effects of design, about design processes and methodologies, the role of the designer and design theory as such. This requires both theoretical and project based research as well as active sourcing of knowledge and experiences from abroad. And it requires relevant structures and models, which can cater for the necessary flow of knowledge from the source of the research to design students and

practitioners and to others, for whom this knowledge is of vital importance and value.

A first step could be to conduct a thorough mapping of the entire design field, on which the visions for a future structure for design education in Denmark could be based. Such a map should cover both design schools under the Ministry of Culture and design courses at numerous universities and poly-technics as well as the many two and three-year design programmes under the Ministry of Education. Such a mapping – within both quantitative and qualitative parameters – has never taken place in Denmark before, which unfortunately also means that no comprehensive map of Danish design education actually exists. Ideally, the end product of the mapping would be a precise and professionally evaluated portrait of each programme, followed by a strategy and concrete initiatives to encourage cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional dialogue as well as synergies from joint research, educational modules and development projects. As a whole, this would strengthen the entire area as well as Denmark's competitive advantages in pursuit of attracting the brightest students and the most interesting partners.

Based on such a mapping a future restructuring of the design educational setup in Denmark will build upon a more solid platform of factual knowledge about each institution's design professional, as well as economical and structural, strengths and weaknesses. Parallel with a coordinated strategy within the educational area, the development of a coordinated design research initiative is crucial. Such an initiative – probably an independent research centre – would ensure dialogue and dissemination of knowledge between the many different institutions and stakeholders, in addition to conducting own research and being responsible for sourcing and processing of relevant knowledge generated abroad. Whether part of the same entity or independently, a similar role needs to be filled to ensure overview of and coordination between the educational programmes on a lower level to guarantee the most complete picture of our accumulated intellectual capital within the design domain possible. This would offer an unprecedented opportunity to schematize which courses are offered at which schools and at which level, which research is being undertaken, which projects and collaborative activities are taking place and which international relations are being pursued by whom at any given time. Moreover, the access to knowledge and the most recent

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research will be made more easily accessible to corporations and society at large.

Within numerous disciplines, Danish design education holds a fairly high level. However, there are also areas where there is clearly room for improvement. The designer needs to know the referential cultural framework of his or her profession to materialize the core of the design tradition he/she wish to project. However, design has changed, as has the role of the designer. Beyond adding aesthetical and functional value to an object, the designer is expected to fulfil a vastly more complex role. The designer of the future is expected to deal with concepts like service design, strategic design, user–centered design, digital design, experience design or interaction design – and yet retaining their role as creators of beauty and functionality. This new role requires knowledge about user involvement and analysis, an understanding of business strategies and commercial consequences, project management capabilities and communicative skills in addition to knowledge of crafts, materials and processes.

Just like design education at all levels needs to be strengthened and more clearly differentiated to cater for an increasingly varied demand for design competence by the market design as an approach to creative and critical thinking needs to be offered elsewhere in the educational system – from the higher classes of elementary school through post-graduate and further education.

As the demand for design services changes and grows, mechanisms to adjust design education accordingly and progressively need to be developed to avoid sudden needs of dramatic reforms. Even though – most probably – the need for designers will increase, each individual educational institution must ensure that the quality and focus of their programmes are assured continuously so that their graduates are able to apply their competences to real life problems and make a living from it from day one, thus also strengthening Denmark as a design nation.

Design support

Another precondition for optimization of design's potential is that decision makers in private and public companies and organizations responsible for development of new or revaluation of existing products and services know the value of design applied strategically and professionally. This, however, requires an open dialogue and exchange

of knowledge about existing and foreseen needs and barriers for innovation, but also a targeted campaign to challenge the attitudes towards integrating design, for many still representing new and undocumented methods and competences.

Bridging suppliers and procurers of design services through the promotion of a common understanding and a common language is most often referred to as design support; one of the traditional design policy pillars. For many years, this mission has mainly been delegated to Danish Design Center. Until the turn of the century, DDC was primarily a knowledge centre targeting industry and the design profession alike. From 2000 – when the institution moved to new prestigious premises including showrooms and conference facilities – the strategic priorities and profile have changed with changing political demands, public funding and leadership. Today DDC appears to have a rather clear profile with strategic focus on communicating to the industry the value of design as a tool for innovation. In addition to their own activities, there is also a stronger focus on regional design support and more direct contact to potential users of design through packages including analysis of the company's capability to and benefit from using design professionally.

Other activities are still part of DDC's contract with the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, but with decreasing prominence, among others exhibition activities where budgets have been reduced significantly the last couple of years. Activities targeted at the design industry are no longer a strategic priority for DDC, which makes the bridge building project somewhat more difficult than previously, even though collaboration with the design industry does exist. One recent example is the development of an entirely new designer database. The more public profile, which to some extent is catered for through exhibitions, has benefited from the transformation of INDEX: – the world's largest design award – from being an independent institution to being a subsidiary of DDC, and from dedicated funds to organize an international design week, which took place for the first time in the fall of 2009.

While the already mentioned activities make up the nucleus of the Danish design support policy, other government initiatives, that have not been part of the official design policy to some extent, have had greater effect on the aforementioned bridge building than the more dedicated initiatives. The most ambitious initiative has been the

Programme for User Driven Innovation that in less than three years has co-funded more than 30 large-scale projects where design methodology and competence have played a key role. Never before has the testing and documentation of design's effects for private enterprises and public services enjoyed the allocation of larger funds. Through a variety of cross-disciplinary projects the programme has offered valuable insight into how broad the scope of design is and the effects that design and designers have on innovation processes. Furthermore, the programme has proven to be a unique opportunity to focus on design, to build design capacity and knowledge and to showcase the fruitfulness of collaboration between designers and other professionals – not only in Denmark, but also in the international design community.

Quite recently it was decided to close the programme. However, Danish Designers believe that it would be highly relevant to draw on the positive experiences from it when discussing future strategies for design support, focusing even more on cross–disciplinary, large scale and diverse projects.

Design is not merely a service one commissions from project to project and from designers or design firms, just like any other consultancy service. For some companies this way of working with design is ideal, provided that the conditions and infrastructure for finding the right partner is there. Rather less focus has been granted the documented value of employing designers and integrating design and design thinking into the organization. In most European countries, economies like Korea and Japan and the US the share of practicing designers employed in manufacturing or service companies is significantly higher than in Denmark. This can probably be explained by historical and structural differences, the typical size of companies and the sectors in which they are engaged, but both experience from abroad and research show that most companies would actually benefit from integrating design into their daily operations, while those reporting the highest output from investments in design work both with internal and external design resources.

We therefore recommend that the focus on design as an integrated, internal resource to strengthen design thinking, cross–disciplinarity and innovation capacity in Danish companies – within manufacturing as well as services, private as well as public – is strengthened. Finally, the concept of design management needs to be paid more atten-

tion to – to optimize the effect of the design activities already invested in strengthening a company's market position.

Design Promotion

Design promotion is the term most often used on the communication of design to a non–professional audience – to the interested citizen, to visitors to Denmark and observers of what is happening on the international design scene, to school children and students – in short – to all for whom an understanding of design means a better understanding of the material as well as immaterial world around them.

Design promotion does happen in Denmark, but is as of today not an articulated part of the Danish design policy. To the extent that the value of design is communicated to a wider audience, it is taken care of by a museum like the Danish Museum of Art and Design, Trapholt, Koldinghus and Louisiana – just to mention the most prominent, as part of export promotion initiatives organized by the Trade Council in collaboration with industry, by other government bodies like the Danish Arts Agency or through organizations' or institutions' participation in international events in Denmark or abroad. Finally – and yet in its very early stages – design has made its way to the curricula of elementary and secondary schools.

Design is all around us – an omnipresent factor in most people's lives, though more so in our own part of the world than many others, emphasizing the importance of being able to understand design to read our environments, the products and services we consume and the information we are constantly subjected to. What is coincidental and what has been deliberate? Why one solution and not the other? Which motives were determining for any given solution? And what kind of signals do I send to the world around me through the material choices that I make? Understanding design is fundamental for making conscious and informed choices, making us more discriminating consumers and better citizens. Seen through such optics it seems puzzling that design promotion is not part of the actual design policy, but deposited in the care of undoubtedly highly competent cultural institutions, but also rather randomly at various ministries' and agencies', organizations' and networks' discretion.

By many people design is perceived as something rather closely linked to lifestyle, fashion and purchasing power – a picture

Design promotion is also about showing who we are – or rather who we want to be – to people from other parts of the world.
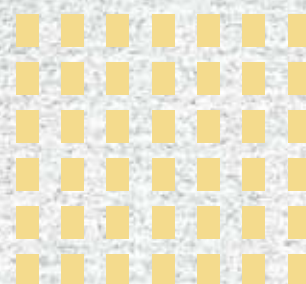
At the same time – as the largest client account for numerous manufacturers – the public sector ought to lead the way in demanding higher quality and better designed products to increase the user experience – whether the users are patients or clients, employees or in any other category.

A new European policy for innovation – integrating design for the first time – will be launched in 2010.

that is manifested repeatedly every weekend in the newspapers' supplements with focus on the home, on current trends and on "the good life" as they – as many people do – see it. There is no reason to question the role that design plays as a measure of perceived wealth and prosperity. What might cause some concern is the lack of focus on design as the actual source of wealth and wellbeing. Our notion of a product's quality derives from our ability to decode its form and function, its material quality and its identity. Exactly the same ability would enhance our judgement of a public service if we were given the tools needed to understand the motives and limitations, the professionalism and the genuine interest that had been invested in creating a good experience for the individual. At the end of the day we would all benefit from all of us being able to render a more qualified appreciation of the services we offer each other.

Danish design is a reflection of Denmark, just like Scandinavian design of Scandinavia and Italian design of Italy. Hence, design promotion is also about showing who we are – or rather who we want to be – to people from other parts of the world, regardless of whether we want them to buy our products or services where they come from or to spend their savings on a vacation in Denmark. In any case, it is relevat to discuss what picture we see of ourselves through the prism of design. Do we want to uphold the image of Denmark and Danish design as a craft-based society, almost exclusively concerned with aesthetics and material quality, or do we wish to be seen as a society where the user is not only asked, but also involved in the development of products and services and where corporate social responsibility is not merely a buzzword? A culture, where access to the common goods, equality and the freedom of speech and freedom of religion are not up for discussion. If we want to portray Denmark as an interesting partner, as a source of inspiration and as a role model for the 21st century, we need to support initiatives that show how we have used and use design to create and constantly improve a society of which we – most of the time – can be proud.

Despite the fact that Danish design has developed radically during the last two decades it needs urgent renewal both at home and abroad, and even though one of the most classic images of Danish design is a three-legged chair, anyone who has sat on Arne Jacobsen's original "ant" chair has experienced its instability. Which we presume was the reason for adding a fourth, stabiliz-

ing leg. For the same reason – as already announced – Danish Designers propose adding a fourth design policy pillar to the three already existing – a pillar that hereinafter will be referred to as

Design Commitment

The largest single procurer of products and services in Denmark – whereof a substantial part is developed and manufactured domestically – is beyond comparison the public sector; national, regional and local authorities as well as public companies and institutions. Some are already experienced users of design services, such as the national railways DSB and the national broadcasting company DR – either of design as an integrated service or as specific design services like visual communication or digital interaction design. This goes for ministries and state agencies, educational and cultural institutions, health care and independent public companies. And yet, design is not even close to playing the role for the development of the welfare society we know that it can – based on both recent and long-term experiences – both in Denmark and elsewhere. In the most recent round of design support initiatives launched in 2007, a fair amount of money was allocated to a limited number of pilot projects within the area known as service design. Supported by the Programme for User Driven Innovation, a number of public institutions like hospitals and municipal elderly care institutions have had the opportunity to test design as an approach to address their specific challenges. The unanimous verdict has been one of great satisfaction among the participants and more importantly – among the end users. In other words, the assumption that design has an important and unquestionably relevant role to play in the fiurther development of the welfare society has been duly confirmed.

For this and a number of other good reasons, further investments in addressing some of the problems facing the public sector by involving design professionals have to be made. Design professionals, but not only designers. The best results have been achieved through inviting integrated, cross-disciplinary project teams where designers work alongside and on equal terms with other professionals with backgrounds in economics, social and technical sciences. Perhaps even in close collaboration with senior officials within ministries and govern-

ment agencies, regions and municipalities. What is important is that we generate more experience from using design in complex public sector projects to benefit from the same documented effects of using design as the private sector has benefited from for a while – for the common good and for every single citizen depending on his/her relation to the public sector.

Taking on a pilot role would seem a logical consequence of the weight that the public sector carries in our economy – trough integrating design thinking and design in the endeavours at filling the growing gap between ever increasing expectations from the users of public services and the limitations on the same services due to scarcity of both financial and human resources. At the same time – as the largest client account for numerous manufacturers – the public sector ought to lead the way in demanding higher quality and better designed products to increase the user experience – whether the users are patients or clients, employees or in any other category. Just like all Danish municipalities are obliged to have an architecture policy, weighing architectural quality alongside all other relevant parameters when granting building permits and planning new public buildings, design policies weighing design quality as equal parameter to price and durability should be mandatory when procuring products and services.

Design is already – both in Denmark and in a number of other European countries – a documented factor in the pursuit of better relations between the individual and the system, the feeling of security in vulnerable areas, social and ethnic integration and better work conditions for both the people who deliver public services and the citizens who receive them. This knowledge needs to be transformed into targeted initiatives to exploit the potential that design represents for further development of the common good. Not only in the next edition design policy, but also as an integrated and inevitable part of all relevant policies where design effectiveness has already been proven.

Danish design in a Scandinavian, European and global context

The heritage we share with the other Scandinavian countries – materialized in a joint visual language and in shared values – has already been discussed. The three countries – Norway, Sweden and Denmark – enrich each other in this communion, but we also have the privilege of sharing a well–established and valuable identity: Scandinavian Design, a brand identity that surprisingly is rarely used. One might wonder why the efforts at strengthening design – both in Scandinavia and globally – are not more coordinated than seems to be the case. We do not believe that coordinated Scandinavian initiatives could or should replace national initiatives, but we do see an untapped potential in adding a strong and historically valid layer of Scandinavian Design to the three individual and national policies.

On the same note, one may ask why Denmark has chosen not to make itself more heard in the development of a European design initiative. The Bureau of European Design Associations – BEDA – represents design organizations and design schools throughout Europe and has worked for decades to encourage the development of a European design policy. Partly as a result of this activity a new European policy for innovation – integrating design for the first time – will be launched in 2010. During the preparatory work, a lot of inspiration has been found in Danish initiatives throughout the last decade or so, but it would be gravely exaggerated to give Denmark any credit for having them turned into benchmarks for our European neighbours. With our solid experience and the position we have achieved as a design nation, we ought to play a much more significant role in Europe – as well as on the international design community – than until today. Finally, it would make a whole lot of sense to ensure that a future Danish design policy alignes logically to and takes the new European platform into consideration.

While already using design actively in the global promotion of Denmark, design plays a minute role within sectors such as international aid and development and in other areas where Denmark has global commitments. Design has rarely been put to its test in development projects in the third world even though one of the most ambitious design policy initiatives to date is INDEX: which in 2005, 2007 and 2009 alike offered solid documentation for design's capacity as a relevant approach to complex problems and the consequences of poverty, natural disasters and hazardous living conditions – in areas where both human survival and the order of nature are at stake. Design should be part of our global agenda and will only get there if a global perspective on what design can do is integrated into our agendas on design research & education, design support, design promotion and design commitment.

Recommendations

As announced in the introduction a list of tangible and realistic recommendations as to how we strengthen the role of design in the 21st century will serve as a summary of the foregoing discussion.

Design research & education

Danish Designers recommend

a thorough mapping of the entire design field, on which the visions for a future structure for design education in Denmark could be based

the development of a national strategy for design education – covering the design schools under the Ministry of Culture and design courses at numerous universities and polytechnics as well as the many two- and three-year long design programmes under the Ministry of Education

the development of a coordinated design research initiative is crucial. Such an initiative would ensure dialogue and dissemination of knowledge between the many different institutions and stakeholders, in addition to conducting own research and being responsible for sourcing and processing relevant knowledge generated abroad

stronger focus on user-involvement practice and analysis, business strategies and commercial consequences, project management capabilities and communicative skills in addition to retained focus on knowledge of crafts, materials and processes

collaboration between crafts-based material design and other traditional design disciplines on one hand and other design disciplines should be encouraged.

Design support

Danish Designers recommend

stronger focus on cross-disciplinary development projects than until today

focus on design as an integrated, internal resource to strengthen design thinking, cross-disciplinarity and innovation capacity in Danish companies – within manufacturing as well as services, private as well as public – as well as design management to optimize the effect of the design activities already invested in strengthening a company's market position

the establishment of three targeted design support programmes, inspired by Programme for User Driven Innovation – however adjusted to cater for the unique challenges we know from innovation projects where neither the end result nor the detailed process is known in advance – for service design, design and sustainability and design and CSR

access to hands-on knowledge for all companies for whom design seems like a possibility – among other things by upgrading and strengthening design knowledge and competence in the regions

bridging the gap between designers and design procurers through a joint knowledge sharing platform – both virtually and by encouraging the development of a real life meeting-place.

Design promotion

Danish Designers recommend

  that funds are dedicated to strengthen design promotion – via already existing players – to school children and students, other specific target groups and the general audience

  that the operational responsibility and curating of design exhibitions in Danish Design Center – with the exception of exhibitions linked to INDEX: and the international design week – is transferred to the Danish Museum of Art and Design

  the establishment of a new council that is given the responsibility of continuously updating and defining the image of Denmark portrayed through design at international exhibitions and fairs and in connection with trade council activities

  a new foundation to support design promotion and development projects, as design projects – together with architecture – have no access to funding from the Danish Arts Council

  that design as an approach to creative and critical thinking is offered throughout the educational system – from the higher classes of elementary school through postgraduate and further education

  Denmark to take on the role as pioneer in advocating design's potential in international fora like the Nordic Council, European Union and a variety of UN organisations.

Design commitment
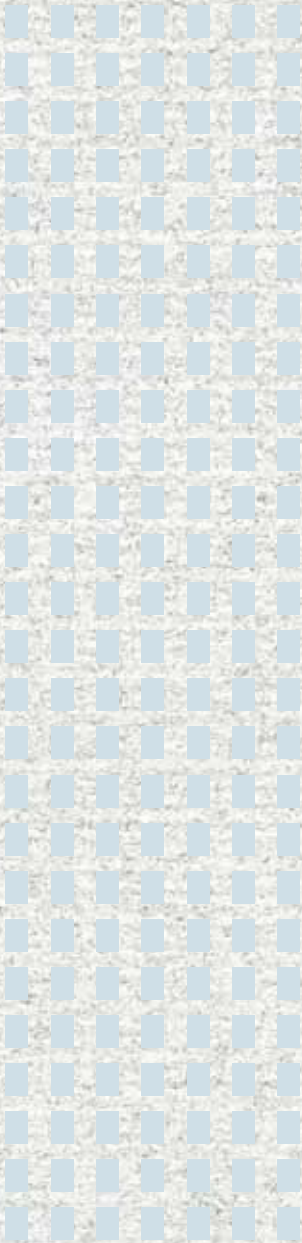
Danish Designers recommend

  that we generate more experience from using design in complex public sector projects to benefit from the same documented effects of using design as the private sector has benefited from for a while – for the common good and for every individual citizen depending on his/her relation to the public sector

  that we transform our existing knowledge of design as a documented factor in the pursuit of better relations between the individual and the system, the feeling of security in vulnerable areas, social and ethnic integration and better work conditions for both the people who deliver public services and the citizens who receive them into targeted initiatives to exploit the potential that design represents for further development of the common goods

  that all Danish municipalities – just as they are obliged to have an architecture policy, weighing architectural quality granting building permits and planning new public buildings – develop design policies securing design quality as equal parameter to price and durability when procuring products and services and to ensure Design for All principles being applied in accordance with UN's Convention on the rights of people with disabilities

  that design is adopted as a relevant approach – as documented by among others INDEX: – in development projects in areas where both human survival and the order of nature are at stake.
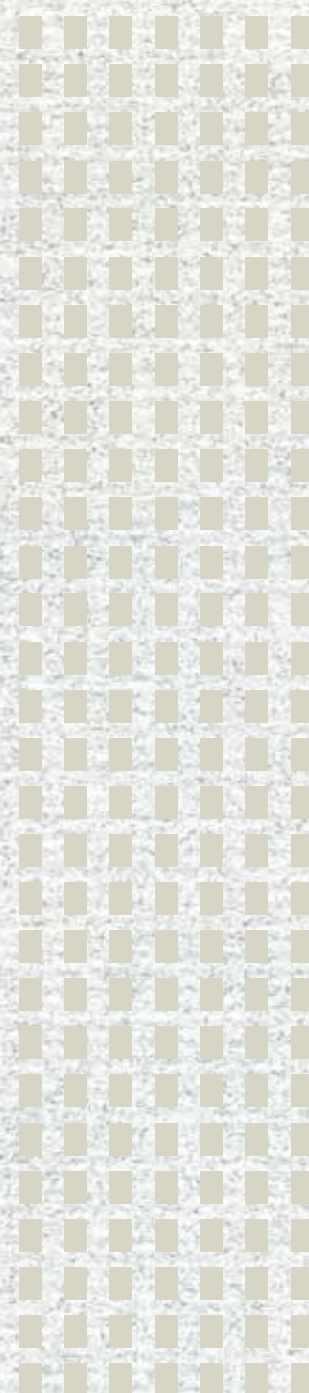
"The natural sciences are concerned with how things are. Design on the other hand, is concerned with how things ought to be."

Herbert Simon

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