

Manifesto

**„The increasingly vital
role of design“**

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02

Danish Designers' analysis of the role of design in a globalised and knowledge-based economy as well as five recommendations for the year 2008.

The world seen through the designer's optics

In this updated version of the organisation's political 'manifesto' Danish Designers point out some of the challenges that designers are facing these years. Several conditions have changed since the first edition was published in 2005. A number of the problems we listed – and suggested solutions to – are now a thing of the past, while new problems occur. Thus, the work on professionalising the industry as well as the communication of design's potential has come to fruition: We have seen the design industry double its sales over the past years, and it seems that the design industry is met by a bigger understanding for its role as a lever in a globalised and knowledge-based economy. Design has gone from being a curiosity to becoming a pivotal force in the knowledge society.

Design is developing, but there will still be a need in years to come to define and emphasize what design is and what designers are able to do. However, there is an increased focus on the role of design within the experience economy and in relation to user-driven and user centered innovation. These very relations occupy a central position in this publication.

For decades Danish Designers has worked internationally, but not until this past decade have we seen that globalisation is not merely a future possibility for the individual designer or a design office; it is something we relate to every single day, just as we relate to whether or how the Danish design educations gradually adapt their educational offers to the changing market conditions.

We will start with a short definition of our basic design conception, based on a short summary of the historic rooting of design and present position, including new areas of work for designers as well as a new use of the design process. Then we will look at the situation in Denmark, which will include details on the design educations, the design industry, the communication of design in Denmark and in industry, the importance of public institutions and politicians for the development of design as a lever.

In the following section we will examine the possibilities and problems for Danish designers' work in a global context.

Finally we will suggest a number of recommendations as an answer to the problems pointed out in the previous.

Design, to design and the role of the designer

The conception of design has been discussed through many years, it has been twisted and turned to a degree that its meaning on the one hand has been expanded to include any kind of shaping and setting, and at the same time the original meaning of the word has had a renaissance.

The origin of the word is English, and if you look up in Merriam-Webster you'll soon realise that the word is not exclusively connected to shaping; its basic meaning is much more connected to a conscious planning.

As an inevitable consequence of the development and proliferation of the concept of design, it has become necessary to deal with design as a phenomenon, designing and the designer's approach to the two latter separately.

Over the past years we have seen a growing understanding that it is not possible to have a meaningful design political debate unless the three concepts are described and related to each other. Design as a concept has undergone a development from primarily representing an expression in the cross field between the aesthetic and the functional to gradually including the

methodical approach to the creation, the uniqueness of the design process as well as the conception's implicit precision and focus (Latin: *deseignare* = to mark; English: *designate* = to point out/seize upon/focus) and the more common use of the word in English: to plan, to model, to form.

In the Danish design debate the predominant issue has been design as an innovation tool – much more so than design as a profession. The position of design in the knowledge-based economy is being thoroughly documented. Yet, we reach an impasse the moment we want to qualify designing as a specific competence, and – perhaps even more so – the designer as a professional – as the prime representative of design as a specific and articulate approach.

Our best explanation of design as a concept would be that design is a „value-adding, radical and undogmatic statement or expression based on an examination of what we are able to acknowledge, as well as of unknown factors influencing the solution of the problem in question“.

Hence the following significance of designing: „To promote the integration between and to exploit the value of as many accessible, specialised

competences as possible and thereby the creation of a value-adding, radical and underground dogmatic statement or expression based on an examination of what we are able to acknowledge, as well as of unknown factors influencing the solution of the problem in question.“ (i.e.: of design). Conclusively: not just designers represent the notion of 'designing' and thereby design.

The role of the designer becomes – based on the unique approaches to problem solving, dialogue, analysis and method, abstraction and visualisation as well as the ability to shape – to initiate, encourage and create a framework for, and by the means of a professional response, to facilitate dialogue and reciprocity between other specific competences in order to „promote integration between and the utilisation of the value of as many accessible, specialised competences as possible, etc.“ – in other words: to design, but also, equally important, make others design.

Consequently, if you should talk about a specific design competence it must be that the designer – based on registration and analysis of a situation – uses his/her creative and innovative capabilities to balance, visualise and concretise the prioritisation of relevant

parameters in a given context and what possible scenarios or solutions you have to work with.

In addition we have one of the designer's classic competences, so to speak: to add to the solution a sensuous and aesthetic dimension. Aesthetics are not just a conception related to physical objects; neither is it just what the eye can see. Aesthetics is the science about the sensuous, originally sensuous well-being; the aesthetic relations between a person and an object or an experience.

When we emphasize the aesthetic dimension it is due to the fact that there – over the last decade or so – has been documented evidence that aesthetic quality represents more than just value to the personal experience. An experience of beauty and connection is meaningful for the work performance of human beings, for the quality of a treatment in the public health care system, for whether a situation provokes stress or not – and for a number of other things, obviously in addition to, the competitiveness that aesthetics add on a market consisting of what you might consider comparable products and services.

The historic rooting of design

So far the design process has primarily been aimed at problems with a physical/visual answer, which makes sense when it is seen in context with the history of the Danish design craft: the profession in this country originates in part from a strong tradition of handicraft products, and in part from an architectural environment at the beginning of the 19th century (in particular manifested by the works of Thorvald Bindesbøll and Knud V Engelhardt) that took an interest in the close environment and user-objects of human beings.

However, in recent years there has been an increased interest in what a design process could mean to problems that are not about shape or form, but rather require answers to complex and difficult questions. This is what is understood by the concept of „immaterial design“.

Because of their educational background, methodical approach to problem solving and capability and ability to innovate and visualise their propositions, designers are good at imagining the context within which the solution should work. Moreover, designers are not afraid to come up

with solutions that are not based on a „technocratic“ extrapolation of already existing/acknowledged solution scenarios; they relate innovatively/radically to possible solutions. In other words: designers ask the „strange“ catalyst questions that can turn out to be a decisive factor for a better examination of the full complexity of the problem as well as its possibilities.

In addition, designers are familiar with the idea of solving problems based on defined values, such as durability, accessibility, economy, production methods, social spaciousness... or ethics. This interdisciplinary approach to problem solving is not only the result of the fact that design as a solution model is built on and invites to respect for and knowledge of a large variety of complementary competences, but also the fact that the methods and processes traditionally and intuitively used by designers are now formalised and documented. This research will be a key element for the Danish design profession to develop competences that can become a contributing factor for the role of design to be experienced as relevant and valuable in the knowledge society, also outside the design environment.

If you compare all of these relations you sit back with an understanding of design as a statement or a methodical direction with a humanistic, holistic and innovative fixed place – which to a large degree makes up for a relevant base to many of the questions that society will have to find answers to.

User-driven innovation, design and the experience economy

In recent years the attention of research, education and business politics has been aimed increasingly at the growth in value as well as the competitiveness related to user-driven innovation, design and the experience economy. The three areas share the same destiny: a lack of – or imprecise – concept formation, which has led to a number of myths and misunderstandings, both inside professional environments, in business life and far into environments related to research in and establishment of a political framework for the area. Without further developing this we find it important to emphasize our own understanding of the different conceptions.

By user-driven innovation we understand a method – or rather: a

number of related methods – that „deciphers“ the experiences and notions of the user in order to understand his or her unacknowledged dreams and needs, interpret these and to find out what represents a trend which is durable enough and represents a potential volume to develop more profitable products and services.

Actually design is also – although it is so many other things as well – a method for developing more profitable products and services through an often material interpretation of accessible knowledge of what a user or a client – the market – wants. This is not to say that design and user-driven innovation are the same, but they often have the same base and the same goal. So when public Denmark links the conceptions it makes sense. The following is from the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority: „Design is an important factor of growth for the industry in the competition with businesses from all over the world. Design can give a better result and contribute to promoting innovation.“

Experience economy is a relatively new conception, by many confused with

everything that has to do with merry go rounds and swings, tourism, art, culture and entertainment. But it is more and more used in a larger sense, as seen from the definition by the network Danish Experience Economy: „...when you appeal to the heart on the market place, at the emotional, rather than at the reason. Many products thus have both a rational dimension and an emotional dimension.“ The Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority also refers to design as part of the culture and experience economy that constitutes an important area of Danish economy, given the fact that it represents more than 16 % of the total of Danish exports.

So there is no doubt that the three conceptions – design, user-driven innovation and experience economy – do relate a lot to each other. However, people seem to agree less on what their relations are. In all likelihood this could explain why so far only few, vague attempts have been made to formulate a coherent and coordinated policy, where the three conceptions interact. Another explanation could be that we do not just have one, but many interpretations of what the three conceptions represent – both within the

professional environments, within the world of education and research as well as on the political scene.

The concept formation of danish designers

As for Danish Designers' own discussions, concepts such as „user-driven innovation“ and ‘user-centred design’ are only central where we have to further develop agendas stated outside the organisation, so to speak. Not that the values and methods the concepts represent contradict those of the organisation, but because they have been the foundation of Danish design through more than fifty years, and therefore not exactly constitute any news.

In addition, we find it relevant to keep a certain degree of reservation with respect to the two mentioned concepts, partly in fear of the „user“ getting a positive discrimination at the expense of others – both users and non-users – and partly because it might be more interesting to examine the relations occurring via the meeting between the many interests in a development course as well as the context within which the expected result must be a part of, rather than focusing on one single interest. Thus, it is a natural part of the design process to balance

as many interests as possible in an „elevated“ synthesis: the interests of the user and the client, but also interests that are above the spirit of the time as well as reigning dogmas, where it is relevant, and above the public opinion and the expectations of the market as well as common conceptions on how existing – or new, for that matter – technologies, materials, form language, processes or business models are used. This is where the design process leads to what is considered to be barrier-breaking – based on exactly such a process – a place, where the result of the process also will be an innovation, but more than just „user-driven innovation“. Where the design process leads to innovation it will be more relevant to talk about „design-driven“ innovation; a fundamentally more advanced approach to innovation, and thereby more valuable with respect to several parameters than „user-driven“ or „market-driven“ innovation. Moreover, design-driven innovation will not be in opposition to the „old“ forms of innovation, „price-driven“ and „technology-driven“ innovation, and – all things considered – not user-driven either, but engage and supplement these where price, technology, the individual user or the expectations of the market play central roles.

Design-driven innovation and experience economy

As mentioned earlier, design is acknowledged as being part of the experience economy. Perhaps not all design belongs in that particular category, while other parts of the design area are central. The conception has traditionally been used on ‘creative’ sectors like tourism, amusement parks, theatre and entertainment in general. Moreover, in recent years the „client experience“ has become a central parameter in many other sectors as well, in particular within trades and services. In other words: the conception has gained ground at a place where the before mentioned definition appears: „when you appeal to the heart at the market place, at the emotional, rather than the reason“. In particular where one can talk about a genuine freedom of choice; first whether you would like to use a given service or buy a given product; then what kind of product you feel the most attracted to. Here design must be said to be a classical parameter. In the most traditional sense of the word design has to do with appeal in people’s minds, with identification and identity, with affluence and the agony of choice. The more „complex“ approach to design is also of great importance within this area, which has given birth to „design-

driven innovations“ like the iPod or – to honour one of our classic designers – Paul Henningsen’s lighting concepts.

However, the connection between design, innovation and experience economy gets really interesting where „design-driven innovation“ is challenged by needs, services and products, where the market has never been based on appeal, identification and identity, affluence and the agony of choice. Design-driven innovation and experience economy could potentially turn out to be a strong concept if they were used on other less obvious sectors that really crave innovation. Sectors, where the individual user only to a small degree has chosen to be exposed to the „experience“ and where the influence on the „supplier“ of the experience at best is quite limited. Obvious sectors here would be public transportation, child care, the health care sector, elderly care and other care sectors, the education sector, the meeting between citizen and public authority, public buildings as well as other „public service“ functions. Here user-driven innovation does not suffice, and in particular not in its purest form. The users will obviously be natural actors in such processes, as mentioned above, but a design methodological approach will start elsewhere: by

asking what the problem really is, and then sketching, often visually, a number of possible scenes and solution models. The design process is based on deliberate dismissal of options which have not stood the test of iteration, much more so than any other method, which means that you start out with the impossible as a possible solution instead of letting what exists already create a narrow frame for the solution. Such dismissal is, thus, the result of something proving to be impossible to do, or the result of something proving to be positively not wishful. In return, the final solution can turn out to be far from the original assumptions regarding the result.

The danish situation

In recent years, and in particular as a result of the work of the Globalisation Council a few years back, it has been emphasized that we can no longer rely on former strengths. The globalisation is no longer an academic affair, something that might hit us one day; it is a reality that daily brings us new challenges, but certainly also new possibilities.

Design can contribute to challenge the potentially negative consequences of the globalisation: the technological development, climate changes,

demographic movements, new power and competition structures etc. It can thus help to prevent that technological capabilities, access to the world market and wealth in the widest sense of the word develop into an elitist privilege. More focus on such concepts as „Design for All“ or „inclusive design“ could be essential in this context.

The political and cultural environment that created the brand „Danish Design“ does no longer exist, but that does not stop us from considering whether we could not learn something from its success and think it into a modern context. Danish Design should be – and is – at least as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

The values that made up the foundation of the welfare state found their cultural co-player in the cultural radicalism. Both the political and the cultural Denmark collaborated: good solutions for the majority were discussed, and that does sound very correct and very Danish. But if we think this into a modern context we have to be aware of the fact that this also comprised an underlying solution of a whole, an unspoken dream of a homogeneity and lucidity that really does not leave much room for differences, and which does not tally well with our present society.

It is therefore necessary that we take an interest in how we can open and integrate the diversity into the planning of space, objects, user-interfaces and immaterial design solutions. Not just because of the diversity anyone can experience in his or her everyday life, but also because of the many differences you have to relate to as a result of the globalisation. The market size for many products and services are no longer counted in millions, but billions of people.

When confronting such new developments we as Danes have a better than average basis for making our mark – quite simply because we carry with us a natural notion of responsibility; that is our tradition. We therefore have the possibility – and the skills – to aim at establishing good, spacious solutions taking into account the different needs and conditions of society and individuals. In other words: to think in terms of inclusiveness rather than exclusivity.

The professionalization in later years of the design profession, increased focus on exports and internationalisation as well as a rapid and necessary consolidation among the leading designers and design offices in Denmark give reason to believe in the future of Danish design in a global context. We still face a number of

challenges, some of which are more acknowledged than others, but we can joyfully see that there has never been more activity, larger growth or more optimism in the design business than there is today.

Design education and research

The newly graduated designer has to be familiar with the latest technology, he/she has to be competent in his/her main area and possess the ability to do interdisciplinary work. Ten years ago designers had a handful of specialised areas (for example industrial, graphic, furniture, space, textile and fashion design). Today students work with a much wider variety of approaches to education and research on the design areas. Still, giving form to, understanding and handling of materials are central elements, as well as visual communication, knowledge about the design process itself and the ability to communicate it.

In addition to the „traditional“ middle range and long range design educations, rooted in the Danish Ministry of Culture, we now see design engineers from Aalborg University, the Technical University of Denmark and the University of Southern Denmark. We also see a specialisation within design and the application of the design process at the business schools,

among historians and material art studies.

Some years ago, the Danish parliament initiated an academic process of the Danish School of Design and Kolding Design School. This is an important signal, but not enough to meet the changed and hardened demands of the market as far as the competences of a designer are concerned. The design educations must prepare the students for an unknown future, and the newly graduated designers that we help are the product of a structure that is already obsolete. Still, we take the liberty to point out where improvements could be made.

Understanding and communicating the designer's main competences have been problematic for many designers. That is why it is important to follow up on the academic process on the two design schools in order to build a tradition for handling knowledge and experiences that were implicit 10 years ago for the individual teacher and which, for the same reason, were so difficult to renew or discuss – and impossible to explain. It is vital that the educations train the designers to perform their competences in a large, professional team. Thus, it is necessary with a natural interdisciplinary dialogue and acknowledgement if design is to develop its potential. We have to kill the myth about the solitary

designer, who can see through the complexity of this world alone. Nine out of ten design offices are one-person companies, which is an advantage in terms of flexibility and independence. But it is very inconvenient in terms of bad economy, poor impact as well as less capacity to take on large and international projects. Before the students commence their studies they should realise that a designer uses 90 % of his/her time on planning, that you should be able to work in an interdisciplinary fashion and that only a fraction of the time is used on „shaping“.

We would like to see the implementation of new educations that are able to cover the demand for new types of design, it be a Danish edition of Stanford's D-school (humanistic, economic and technical studies) or a new education that covers the foreseen increase in service design, rather than seeing the already established educations „flushing out the baby“ and give up their specialities.

The educations must differentiate themselves from each other and specialise

A part of this discussion concerns the fact that the design schools – that are founded on traditional crafts – find themselves between two chairs: the university chair and the shaping chair. And the most urgent question

– in light of the speed with which the integration of design profits from these years – should be whether it would be possible to separate the two concepts and recognize that we are dealing with two different professions: crafts and design. And then let them develop each on their own terms and within their own possibilities, on the one hand as an artistic education rooted in the Danish Ministry of Culture, and on the other hand as a strategically founded education rooted in the Ministry of Science, and integrated as much as possible with the other university educations.

There is no doubt that the two areas are closely related, but if we force the two conceptions together we will not be able to benefit enough from their respective possibilities.

The academic process and the new research in and about design is gaining terrain in Denmark, at the benefit of both the profession and the educations. „To design“, the design process itself, is still an area where we need more knowledge, however, while we see a large portion of the research describing finished design, rather than looking at the entire flow from conception through designs and materialization to use and – eventually disposal. To be able to develop the profession we can only urge the responsible parties to concentrate

on this area, even though this will mean that the designers should be educated to handle such a task themselves.

Interdisciplinary work is a working term for all designers, but we know too little about what happens during the meeting between different professional competences; what happens to the „design“ during this process? We are certain that the designer has a part in all links of the value chain, but we do not know enough about where in the process the designer adds value, and what kind. Research in this field will be a determinant factor for the professionalisation of the industry, its development and its competitiveness.

The education of the designers does not, however, start and finish at the educational institutions. A good designer has been influenced from baby nursery and has a lifelong course ahead of him/her. What is particular about Danish design students is that they are fundamentally innovative, anti authority and possess a large degree of humanistic understanding. Future Danish designers must compete with skilled designers on a global market, and it is important in this competition to maintain these qualities, such as the ability to ask questions regarding the client's problem and to insist on simple, ethical and environmental qualities.

These years the ministries of culture and education focus on design and architecture in the public schools. Design has already been well established as a subject at high school level – an initiative that will foster better and more critical users of design. At the same time the soil is fertilised with a generation of skilled designers. Further training is also inevitable, but it is an area that has not been demanded enough by the designers, and the possibilities for further training are limited. We have examined our members' needs for years and tried to fulfil these, but we will look forward to the establishment of more possibilities for further training within the educational system.

Finally we have to discuss how many designers this county should educate and at what level. It could turn out to be important to focus on quality rather than quantity.

The political reality

An important barrier for the political understanding of design's potential through the many links – ministries, boards, institutions etc. – is the lack of coordination as well as the fragmented political handling of design. The problem is known in most countries, where you have something you could call a design policy, but this should not stop Denmark from leading the way with a more suitable treatment of the area.

The Danish Ministry of Culture is still the ministry in control of all the „traditional“ educations, and it does support design progress activities, in Denmark as well as abroad, that emphasize Denmark's status as a nation of culture and design.

The communication of design, the professionalisation of the design profession as well as other design promotion initiatives are being administered by the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority on behalf of the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs. The most important part of this effort has been channelled through Danish Design Center that has had a hard time maintaining a responsible professional profile due to cutbacks.

In recent years the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation has shown increased interest in this area, in particular with regards to research within and development of the experience economy and because design is now part of several educations at university level, among other places at Aalborg University, the IT University of Copenhagen, the Technical University of Denmark and the University of Southern Denmark.

The Danish Ministry of Education has also invested in the design area, since we can see a curriculum for both

primary schools, high schools, short educations and further educations. This division of ministries does not necessarily have to be a problem, but it will be if the dialogue at the respective institutions remains selective as to own resort areas. This will force things into silos, making the necessary co-thinking impossible.

For a design policy to really make any sense, there is thus a pronounced need to think in wholes – also within the political system. The only way to achieve this is that the interdisciplinary work – that is already talked about with regards to the design educations and research – also finds parallels in the political system.

It is essential that design is rooted somewhere in the political landscape and the public institutions, where there is a will as well as competences to co-think the technological, cultural, commercial and social role of design.

The design industry

Through a number of years various studies have confirmed the industry's own assumptions in terms of the design industry's fragmented character. And despite the fact that a certain visible consolidation has taken place in recent years it still remains a fact that the Danish design industry mainly consists of companies of 1-3 people. Thus, it is important for

the industry's competitiveness and resistance to international and other domestic suppliers of design services that this consolidation continues. Mainly because the many very small companies find it very difficult to convince the other business markets about their capacity to take on their projects. There is a big need to make people understand this untenable situation within the design business, partly through network activities, partly through a focused effort on further education.

The educational system plays a significant role; it must prepare the candidates for the commercial realities of being part of a supply chain so that they can relate to what it means to run your own business at a professional level – and it should open their eyes to the possibility of accepting jobs in other parts of the business life. We see the first steps, but we are still far from an acceptable level.

We also need to make an effort with regards to the designers that have already graduated. Single and two-person companies need the necessary knowledge and the necessary tools in order to be able to make qualified choices of strategy and business models. A deliberate choice to pursue ones profession in a one-man or at least small business ought to be encouraged, while the consolidation

effort should be directed at the many design offices that stay small because they don't know how to grow, but possess strong and sharp professional competences.

This structure with many small design companies is worrying for many reasons. It is in itself a barrier against interdisciplinary work, and it makes the companies vulnerable to changes in the market and to the need for competence development, network building etc. Finally it is experienced – in particular by medium sized and big companies – as a barrier with regards to the equality that a business wants towards its suppliers.

In order to trigger the immaterial potentials of this profession it is a prerequisite that we – in addition to the already mentioned consolidation – encourage the industry as well as the trades and the service sectors to hire people with a design education. This also goes for commercial counselling services and the public sector. This is necessary in order to direct focus on design methodological approaches and solution models and also to strengthen the confidence of business life and of society in the validity and seriousness of the solutions. Moreover, documentation does exist at this point proving that companies that hire designers perform better than those without designers.

Exports and international positioning

In addition to the barrier that the structure of the business creates for the development of the design industry it is a fact that a number of Danish design companies are overtaken on the inside by foreign competitors – both with regards to design solutions for Danish companies and with regards to international jobs. The exports of Danish design as a counselling service has increased steadily in recent years, and it should be further strengthened by focusing more on design as a service than until now where the exportation of Danish design has been thought of as a rub-off effect caused by the promotion of exportation of Danish, design-based products.

A bigger insight into the actual and potential Danish strength positions and the role of design in relation to those on the Danish representations abroad is to be desired. A great deal of attention has traditionally been given – and is still given – to products that in many people's minds represent „Danish design“; products like furniture and lighting, decorative and functional objects for the home, and Danish fashion and textile. They all contribute to a positive image of Denmark and Danish design, but at the same time it also firmly cements the idea that we only supply life style design for a rich clientele. It would be useful to Danish

design and Danish competitiveness in the long run to remove focus from such objects and direct it at the knowledge and the competences that Denmark can contribute with in areas such as health, play and learning, working environment and security, energy and environment, communication, transportation and logistics – only to mention a few of the most obvious.

Initiatives such as INDEX: have been important, and hopefully it will still be able to play an important role as catalyst for the image of Danish design as a tool of change. If we are to take advantage of the power that INDEX: generated it is, however, decisive that the organisation can stay and act independently of institutions, such as the DDC, for example, in order to create a platform on which forward looking partnerships and initiatives can be established without having to concentrate – and coordinate with – the ongoing and commercially motivated design promotion effort.

Finally we have to mention the positive effect of attracting one or more international design companies to Denmark. More and more international manufacturing companies position their development and design departments in Denmark, which is very encouraging. However, we will not benefit from

the full effect until Denmark is perceived as an international centre for strategic design, design counselling and innovation, as an independent professional environment. It would be a breakthrough for Danish design if some day one or more important design companies from the UK or the US should choose to set up an operation in Denmark.

The communication aspect

The responsibility for communicating the importance of design has for many years been that of the Danish Design Center as the primary „operator“ for the governmental design policy. In recent years the strategy of DDC has been sharpened and more focused in such a way that the centre's communication mainly has been focused towards Danish business life, and the message is that design is good business. This focus has been reasonable in light of the economic framework of which the centre disposes. At the same times it starts the debate of whether DDC is the right actor to „raise“ the general public, create a debate and dynamics as well as to be in charge of the display of design, in the popular meaning of the word, and also whether the institution is capable of communicating the non-commercial benefits of design. You could fear that the essential cultural aspect – and thereby the value-based

aspect beneficial to society – and not least the possibilities this approach has for Danish design in an international context, is left to its own devices.

Design's documented potential with regards to optimizing public allocations as well as the public interaction with the individual citizen has been overlooked so far in the communication of design. Design is not just about developing new physical products, but also about improved communication, user-orientation and innovation with regards to services and an improvement of the co-relation between private and public actors. It is true that the governmental design policy has granted money for a number of pilot projects, where the potential of design in relation to optimizing public allocations must be documented, and it is true that there is an increased focus on concepts such as service design. However, we still need an effort to make heads of purchase and the authorities responsible for allocations locally, regionally and nationally, understand how design has relevance as to the public services they are in charge of. The lack of knowledge of the potential of design with regards to public allocations and services makes the price of the merchandise, or the price of the service, the most important purchase criteria, here and now.

Apart from missing out on qualitative improvements within the public sector the lack of qualitative purchase criteria contributes to the weakening of the innovative power in small and medium sized companies.

It is in a sense positive that larger and larger amounts have been granted to the promotion of and research in design. However, we still need an overall strategy that also includes public purchase policies, exportation of design as a counselling service, the understanding of design as part of the subjects at primary and high schools, a focused professionalisation of the design profession and a real integration between the design educations and the other secondary educations.

Thus, it is still of utmost importance for the total promotion of the design area in Denmark that DDC formulates and receives means to realise a more significant and progressive role – both towards the present and above-mentioned new target groups – and not least as a torch bearer for Danish design internationally, or – alternatively, that new actors are brought into play, actors, who can contribute with activities and initiatives aimed at target groups that are not a central part of DDC's strategy,

and with a focus on the role of design with regards to human life quality, innovation within the public sector, global challenges such a changes in the climate, the fight against poverty, conflict solution as well as the society we leave behind for future generations.

The industry, the rest of the business life and the organisations of the industry

For many different reasons the Danish industry has gained a significantly better understanding of design in recent years, and consequently a better understanding of design's application, design methodological approaches and designers in general. This „growth“ is reflected in the design industry too: according to Statistics Denmark the design industry achieved an 18 % increase in growth from 2005 to 2006. However, the full potential is far from being exploited. The use of design has first and foremost spread among medium sized and large companies, and most often in companies that depend and compete on an international market. It is therefore not possible to contribute this growth to a single actor or a single initiative. It is more likely the result of a focused effort from the authorities – crystallised in the DDC, among others – in combination with a massive focus on design in the news

media, on conferences and in the public debate.

Studies support that using design makes sense. Danish and foreign design centres have studied the measurable effects of design, and there is left no doubt that there is a direct connection between the strategic use of design and turnover, access to international markets and profitability.

The big organisations seem to have discovered the value of design too, it be industrial organisations, employer organisations, employee organisations and industry specific organisations. What we still miss, though, is more focus from these organisations when it comes to the unexploited potential of design within areas such as business service, retail trade, food industry, agriculture, tourism, transportation and logistics. Just to mention a few.

Some years back the debate was about „design: art or business?“. Today there is less focus on – and bigger understanding of – the fact that design is not about art. However, there is still a lot to be desired when it comes to the organisations' understanding of the number of sectors that design can influence and strengthen, both within the trade, service and industry, and not least within the area of public services.

Recommendations

Danish Designers' recommendations
can be summed up in the following five points:

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Education and research

Danish Designers recommend:

- that a future education strategy strongly distinguishes between design and crafts.
- that the educational responsibility is moved to the Ministry of Science, enabling the design educations to be thought into the technical, mercantile and humanistic educations.
- that the „classical“ design educations are supplemented with new combined educations, where design thinking and design methods come into play, fully integrated with the technical, mercantile and humanistic sciences.
- that a balance is secured between „basic research“ in the uniqueness of design, methods and design's position in the value chain on the one hand, and „practical research“, where known design methods and design thinking are tested in order to develop particular products, services and systems, on the other.
- that a design methodological understanding is offered as a subject of its own and that it is also integrated with other methodological subjects at primary and secondary educations, high schools and technical schools.
- that the research generated at the many educational and research institutions that have design research or design related research – among others Centre for Design Research – is made accessible to the design industry and industry at large.

Political consequence

Danish Designers recommend:

- that politicians focus on the barriers that public purchase systems and lack of knowledge of the potential of design in the different parts of the administration represent. Moreover, this lack of commercial competences and the particular limitations of the design profession with relation to critical mass must have a particular consideration when it comes to developing support systems, pools and development programs that otherwise could be relevant tools for the further development of the industry.
- that municipalities, regions and government agencies, as well as government itself are encouraged to formulate design policies for their own developments and interaction with the public.

Internationalisation

Danish Designers recommend:

- that Born Creative is further developed and expanded with incentives for the establishment of partnerships and the formulation of export related business models, so that companies committing themselves to improve competences, strategic armament and growth are offered real possibilities for growth through tailored tools, growth resources, help to further professionalisation and access to managerial resources.
- that arrangements are made to establish grants, scholarships or favourable financing, where the criteria for a grant are the will to grow and an actual potential to grow.
- that design companies that have proven their willingness to export and that work focused on an export oriented strategy are invited to participate in export promotions and other Danish initiatives, where their specific competences can be shown to a relevant public.
- that funds are set aside in a pool in order to attract international lecturers, guest teachers and professors for the educations that have design as a method, strategic competence and innovation tool as central elements.
- that an information and education course is developed for the benefit of Danish representations abroad, offering counselling and other services for Danish companies regarding design as a knowledge-based service as well as the new directions within the design area.

New commission

Danish Designers recommend:

- that a commission for design and innovation is established with representatives from the design profession, relevant educational institutions, business life, public companies and institutions, relevant boards and ministries and from the political life. The expectation to the commission would be a statement on how Danish designers – and other actors representing this particular way of viewing problems you could call design thinking – in the best possible way could contribute to economic growth, social gain and a more innovate society.

Communication

Danish Designers recommend:

- that students at primary schools via secondary schools and into the further educations are stimulated to work and to have an opinion concerning our physical surroundings as well as the products, the increasing number of services and the communication we surround ourselves with.
- increased focus on Design for All – design with the emphasis on accessibility, user-friendliness and diversity – contributing to promote the consciousness of the individual regarding the significance of design.
- that there will be focus on design content and design quality with regards to public offers and public space. Denmark is far behind compared to a number of other European cities when it comes to a conscious use of design and designers. Such different cities as Barcelona, Amsterdam and Bristol are leading the way when it comes to exploiting the potential of design for the benefit of citizens and visitors, much more so than Copenhagen or Aarhus, for example.
- that the responsibility for communicating design's commercial significance and the general communication of design's value in a social sense is either separated – or that we ensure more coherence and balance between the two areas.
- that the resources for the international communication is concentrated into two pools, respectively

in an independent INDEX: pool that continues the building of a global position for Denmark as catalyst for the role of design as a solution model with regards to meaningful, global challenges, and into a pool that secures the participation of Danish designers, design offices and communicators of Danish design competence when it comes to Danish promotions, for example under the Danish Exportation Council, the Danish Cultural Institute or others.

- that a design council is established that takes on the role as communicator of design's role and significance with regards to relevant themes – in the same way that the Danish Council of Ethics and other counselling institutions do.
- that resources are granted to the development of a clear communication platform for design's role in addressing issues, and a communication effort, linked to the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009.

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