Denmark is a leading design nation with a strong design history that is admired around the world. Since it was founded in 1978, the Danish Design Centre (DDC) has been respectful of this history. In recent years, the organisation has undergone many changes. Our focus has shifted from increasing the awareness of Danish design in a broad sense to increasing awareness of design as a competitive parameter and, more recently, to focusing on the use of design as a driver of innovation and development in companies and society at large. The DDC understands the broad scope, variation and diversity that characterises design as a profession and as a discipline.

Therefore, the DDC is dedicated to promoting the use of design in business and industry, helping to professionalise the design industry and documenting, promoting and branding Danish design in Denmark and abroad.

Thus, the DDC’s work is clearly tied in with in the current agenda for Danish business, innovation, education, export and cultural policies.

Today, there is widespread awareness in Danish business and industry that the use of design contributes to value creation in companies. Many companies are already using design methods in their innovation activities. Nevertheless, many companies have an untapped growth potential that the use of design could help them tap into.
The DDC’s new strategy is rooted in history and in the qualities that Danish design stands for, but it is also oriented towards the future. New consumption patterns, new markets and new demands on services and products mean new possibilities for Danish companies but also the risk of being rendered irrelevant by the global competition. In this climate, the ability of designers to translate new trends and technologies into solutions that are attractive, functional and meaningful to the users becomes a crucial competitive factor. In the coming years, the DDC will be conducting systematic experiments with design-based value creation in companies and sharing the resulting knowledge.

**The DDC has a vision of contributing to making design one of the three most important positions of strength for Danish companies.**

The DDC operates in a complex environment at the intersection of business and industry, the design profession, education and research institutions and public institutions. The DDC has high ambitions but also a sense of humility and a clear understanding that the task of increasing companies’ use of design can only be addressed in open partnerships. The DDC’s ambitions have to be translated into concrete actions and initiatives that make sense to companies throughout the country.

The DDC is now building a new organisation – an organisation that business and industry, the design profession and other stakeholders can be proud of and draw inspiration from. Correspondingly, the strategy is deliberately ambitious, open and innovative. Therefore, the strategy is also intended as an invitation to the DDC’s stakeholders to engage in a dialogue about our work.

**Lars Mikkelgaard-Jensen**  
Chairman of the Board  

**Christian Bason**  
Chief Executive
INTRODUCTION

This strategy was formulated in a close dialogue involving the DDC’s board, leadership, staff and other stakeholders. The strategy defines the direction for the DDC in the coming years, with the relocation to the BLOX complex in early 2018 as a natural milestone and an occasion to revisit and renew the strategy.
THE STRATEGY IS STRUCTED AROUND FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

Vision
Where does the DDC want to go?

Mission
What sort of value does the DDC create, for whom, and where?

Activities
What does the DDC deliver, and in what ways?

Competences
What capabilities should the DDC have?

Organisation
How should the DDC be led and managed?

Together, the answers to these questions make up the DDCs strategy.
Global competition and rapid technological developments are putting companies under pressure to create new innovative products, services and solutions. The companies’ ability to understand not only what is technologically feasible but also what is valuable and helpful to their clients and end-users is crucial to their competitiveness.

**It is the DDC’s vision to help make design one of the three main positions of strength for Danish companies.**

Good design contributes to competitive products and solutions. Designers place the client centre stage, and designers are able to translate new insights into concepts and concrete solutions that provide value to their clients and end-users. A number of Danish and international studies, including studies conducted by the Danish Business Authority and by the Design Management Institute, have found a significant correlation between companies’ use of design and their value creation and have documented that so-called ‘design-based’ companies outperform other companies.
Photo: The DDC visits Anne Black to receive input for the initiative Scaling by Design.
MISSION
WHAT SORT OF VALUE DOES THE DDC CREATE?

As Denmark’s national design centre, it is...

**the DDC’s mission to promote the use of design in business and industry, to help professionalise the design industry and to document, promote and brand Danish design in Denmark and abroad.**

In other words, the DDC aims to ensure the best possible meeting between the supply and demand sides in the design field.

On the demand side, the DDC helps to mature companies to enable them to use design more strategically and thus increase the value of the products or services they provide.

On the supply side, the DDC helps to identify and develop market potentials for Danish design companies and to strengthen the competences design companies need in order to tap into these market potentials.

The DDC’s key approach in this encounter is systematic experimentation with design-based value creation in companies.
Figure 1. The DDC links the demand and supply sides of design.

Systematic experiments with design-based value creation in companies
THE DDC’S PLATFORMS

The DDCs mission is reflected in a number of platforms (strategic focus areas). New platforms will be established as a result of changes in:

**The context**
Political, economic, social, technological or societal developments that impact the companies’ underlying conditions and long-term growth potentials in...

**The market**
Specific market potentials. This may include new technological opportunities, physical products, services, consumption patterns, new production forms, new business models or other factors. These market changes also provide the basis for a significant ...

**Business potential associated with using design**
How can design create value on a given (changing) market? For example, what roles does design play in relation to new production forms and business models, and what competences do designers need?

Platforms are established and organised to facilitate close collaboration with the DDC’s stakeholders. The selection of platforms is determined on the basis of agendas that are important to several of the DDC’s main stakeholders, including the members of Design Society and BLOX, the initiative for architecture, construction, urban development and design. Another consideration is a clear focus on the chances of ensuring co-funding from companies, foundations, the public sector, the European Union etc. The platforms serve as the basis of the DDC’s development and scaling of initiatives and programmes.

In the coming years, the DDC is going to focus on a portfolio of five platforms. Depending on the DDC’s capacity and developments in the context, the market and the business potential associated with the use of design, this focus may be modified and/or expanded.
DESIGN-DRIVEN BUSINESS MODELS

demand

DESIGN CITIES

DESIGN FUTURE FABRICATION

DESIGN HEALTH

DESIGN DIMENSIONS

supply
Increasingly, companies need to be able to grasp and act on new opportunities rapidly. New disruptive business models and markets provide new opportunities, as exemplified by Airbnb, Endomondo and Podio. Sharing and circular are examples of concepts that companies need to integrate in the way they do business in order to be able to cooperate with engaged consumers on new business models, revitalising the notion of ‘buying and selling’. Design methods and the use of design as a strategic tool has the capacity to strengthen companies’ understanding of their clients and customers and thus their ability to react quickly to new business opportunities and strengthen their position on existing markets.

*Design-driven business models* is a development platform for programmes aimed at boosting the demand of design in business and industry at large, in part by promoting development in Danish design agencies. The DDC will examine how companies and designers may reshape their businesses in the middle of a transformative technological development with changing consumer needs. One of the outcomes of this platform is the *Plus programme*, which enhances companies’ capacity for business development and innovation via design methods, and the program *Scaling by Design*, which aims to enhance the ability of Danish product design firms to scale on a national and an international level.
The DDC is hosting a workshop around the Scaling by Design initiative.
The production landscape is rapidly changing. Technologies such as 3D-printers, laser-cutters and new user-friendly hardware and software make it possible rapidly to transform ideas into tangible prototypes. The new production conditions allow for the development of efficient and flexible systems and innovative products that incorporate technology. In this field of possibilities, design can serve as a key competence for developing systems and products that link technology with client needs. Designers know how to navigate and take a needs-based approach in complex development processes, and they have unique qualifications for qualifying, inspiring and handling interdisciplinary innovation processes when industrial engineers, technicians and mechanics cooperate on product development. Technology also gives design companies access to manufacturing technologies and enables new business models and an expansion of the design field.

*Future Fabrication* is a development platform for programmes aimed at improving Danish production companies’ capacity for added growth and for creating more innovative and sustainable solutions. In cooperation with industry, the platform develops specific programmes and projects aimed at helping Danish production companies use design methods and explore the role of the design profession in a new production paradigm.
All over the world, cities are developed and expanded as a result of increasing globalisation, growing urbanisation and the development of new technologies. People’s needs and the challenges faced by cities are developing at a similar, rapid pace. Future business models for urban development are increasingly going to rely on open data flows and new technologies and will be driven by clients’ and citizens’ specific needs.

DesignCities is a development platform for programmes that uncover and strengthen the role of design in urban development. With DesignCities, the DDC aims to bring companies, citizens and public organisations more closely together around a shared focus on designing cities via new types of partnerships. These partnerships explore the role of design and strengthen new business models for companies to take part in future urban development. From a design perspective, DesignCities explores the concepts of smart city and big data as well as areas such as urban planning, architecture and strategic urban development.
The healthcare sector is rapidly changing, and a growing pressure on resources requires us to find new ways to deliver and provide healthcare services and improve efficiency. For example, the use of new technology to automate standardised work tasks is going to present dramatic challenges to both the market and the design of the tasks. At the same time, digitisation and big data give rise to new business opportunities. There is already a growing demand for holistic solutions that integrate new technology and personalised data and, not least, accommodate patient needs.

**DesignHealth** is a development platform for programmes that use design as a value-creating facilitator to connect companies and the healthcare sector in order to create new, scalable solutions that can be exported. With this platform, the DDC aims to examine how design can contribute to realising the commercial potential of using big data in better and broader applications, making new healthcare technology more user-friendly and intuitive and offering smooth and coherent paths through the healthcare service. Another goal for the DDC is to help co-develop and qualify design companies that have the potential to enter this market.
Design-added value to innovation and business development is growing rapidly. A growing number of companies are involving designers and using design methods, and there is growing recognition of the value of design. Denmark has a unique design narrative and perhaps a special Danish design DNA that matches current and future market needs – not least internationally.

*Design Dimensions* is a development platform for programmes aimed at strengthen and expand the supply of design aimed at companies. With this platform, the DDC aims to promote the development of the design field, including charting what characterises successful design companies, and what it will take for Danish design companies to expand, in a national as well as an international context.
ACTIVITIES
WHAT DOES THE DDC DELIVER, AND IN WHAT WAYS?

The development, implementation and scaling of DDC activities involve three key ingredients: experiments, learning and sharing.

These ingredients are the DDC’s DNA.
EXPERIMENTS
The DDC plans and conducts systematic experiments with design-based value creation in companies. The DDC has a design-driven approach to these experiments. This means that methods for creative idea generation, prototyping, visualisation, co-design etc. are a natural part of the DDC’s approach. The DDC’s use of design methods to increase the use of design contributes to added innovation capacity and ownership as well as a high degree of legitimacy with target groups and stakeholders. The DDC always develops and plans systematic experiments in close collaboration with companies, designers and other actors, for example business promotion and innovation actors, educational institutions, other actors in the innovation hub BLOX and the sister organisations in Design Society.

LEARNING
The DDC harvests and documents the new knowledge and insights about the companies’ use of design that are generated in the DDC’s programmes. In this effort, the DDC relies on qualitative data and methods from anthropology, ethnography and sociology as well as quantitative methods from the fields of economics, statistics and political science. These learning-oriented activities are conducted as an integrated part of the experiments that the DDC plans. The goal is to ensure ongoing learning. that is scalable, and which can be used to enrich the experiments. This new knowledge is translated into formats (e.g. case descriptions, methods, management reports etc.) that can be made widely available to all companies, stakeholders and political decision-makers.

SHARING
The DDC makes learning and insights easily accessible to all companies and other stakeholders via a variety of channels for communication and sharing. The effort – and thus the choice of communication channel – is always going to be scaled to ensure its relevance in relation to the content and target groups. Roughly speaking, the tools may be digital, tangible or network and event-based. In addition to our own channels, such as ddc.dk, the DDC uses a variety of others, including digital means such as microsites, digital magazines, digital newsletter, online videos, apps, info-graphics and, of course, content distribution via relevant social media and collaboration platforms. In many cases, it will be obvious to include partners from the design field and companies as co-creators (or independent creators) of content and knowledge sharing products. Tangible means of distribution may include printed matter, booklets, magazine production, exhibitions or physical design-based tools for, e.g., visualisation or processes. The DDC has a unique role as a distributor in a Danish context as well as a contributor of insight and knowledge on an international level as a way of branding Danish design and Danish design skills.
Across experiments, learning and sharing, the DDC uses a variety of approaches, from brief explorative processes (prototyping) to more long-term facilitated processes (programmes) and on to ambitious initiatives for the achievement of national effects (scale). Thus, the DDC’s approach can be illustrated as follows (see illustration on page 25):

**PROTOTYPING PHASE**

During the prototyping phase, the DDC’s platforms serve as the basis for the development and planning of innovative processes that test how design can generate value for companies. This development takes place in close cooperation with companies and other actors. During the prototyping phase, the emphasis is therefore more on the development of systematic experiments with design-based value creation in companies and less on learning and sharing. The DDC’s role during this phase is to be the driver of the development process. The DDC selects focus areas under each of the platforms in a design-driven process, including ongoing trend-watching, user surveys and dialogues with key actors in business and industry, design companies, education and research institutions, government agencies and leading national and international experts. This dialogue continues throughout the prototyping phase, as hypotheses about design-based value creation in selected areas are tested by means of small-scale projects, workshops, seminars and symposiums, where knowledge is shared and developed in exchanges with key stakeholders.

**PROGRAMMING PHASE**

During the programming phase, several, mostly fairly extensive, processes are conducted in cooperation with companies and other actors to test design as a driver in the development of new value-creating products, services and business models. During this phase, systematic experiments are conducted on a bigger scale, and the learning element plays a key role. The DDC’s role during the programming phase is to facilitate, manage, drive momentum and support productive meetings between companies and designers, to plan and document learning across the programmes and to share new insights on an ongoing basis.
SCALING PHASE

During the scaling phase, insights and learning from the programme phase are disseminated in formats that give a much bigger number of companies access to new knowledge and thus enables scaling. During the scaling phase, the main emphasis is on the sharing element, while learning and experimentation are toned down. The DDC’s role during the scaling phase is to convey outcomes and findings and to influence key decision-makers to share the findings within their own organisations, thus helping to spread the outcome of the experiments on a national and/or international basis. This may involve other companies within the same field, educational institutions, government agencies and trade organisations looking to develop new consultancy or other services or design companies looking to develop new competencies and services.
THE DDC’S WORKING PRINCIPLES

The prototyping, programming and scaling phases are framed by a set of shared working principles embraced by the DDC.
DESIGN-DRIVEN
The DDC is a catalyst for the use of design as a driver of improved innovation and competitiveness in Danish companies. Therefore, the DDC relies on design methods in its efforts to expand the use of design in Danish companies and to convey the value of a design-driven approach based on experiences embedded in the organisation.

INNOVATIVE AND LEARNING
The DDC tests new approaches to increase companies’ value creation and includes learning across the DDC’s efforts and programmes aimed at developing new programmes. The DDC is in close contact with leading knowledge environments in business, industry and design, both in Denmark and abroad.

NEVER ALONE
The DDC’s results are mainly created in cooperation with others. Therefore, the DDC always plans and implements platforms and specific programmes in cooperation with companies, designers and other actors.

OPEN BY DEFAULT
The DDC’s work is aimed at Danish business and industry at large, and we therefore have an obligation to make knowledge about design-driven value creation in companies widely accessible.

FOCUS ON VALUE IN COMPANIES
The DDC never carries out programmes that are not seen to be of value to business and industry. The DDC has high ambitions on behalf of the Danish design profession.

PROFESSIONAL
The DDC has a professional approach to all types of collaboration and partnerships, has respect for the specific insights and qualifications of different professions and has a high appreciation of the Danish design tradition.
COMPETENCIES
WHAT CAPABILITIES SHOULD THE DDC HAVE?

Translating the DDC’s strategy into specific initiatives and programmes requires competencies across a broad range of areas, including:

BUSINESS
To engage companies and help target the use of design in companies, insight into the conditions faced by private companies is crucial. This includes insight into what it takes to start up and operate a business, including an understanding of business economics, business models, management, organisation etc.

DESIGN
To be a credible organisation, the DDC has to have profound insight into Danish design: Danish design history and ‘DNA’, design methods, design trends and the design industry and its actors. The DDC also needs to have a wide perspective and strong, deep-rooted international relations.

COMMUNICATION
Communication is a built-in aspect and support structure for everything the DDC does. It is therefore essential for the DDC to master communication with all target groups: companies, designers, government agencies, education and research institutions etc. The DDC also needs to be able to use all relevant channels of communication.

TECHNOLOGY
All the DDC’s platforms have a key focus on technology and on the capacity of design to help integrate technology in products, services and systems. The DDC therefore needs insight into technology, including advanced production methods, IoT, information and data visualisation and open data and has to stay up date on technological developments.

SOCIAL RESEARCH
Collecting and sharing learning insights from the experiments the DDC initiates requires a strong grasp of methods from both the social sciences and the humanities including data gathering, interview techniques and quantitative/qualitative analysis. To that end, the DDC draws on a range of disciplines, including anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies, sociology and economics.
The DDC is embedded in, especially, the business and innovation policy agenda. In addition, many of the DDC’s activities involve close interactions with various actors from the public sector, which requires good insight into public organisations, political decision-making processes and policy development. Furthermore, the DDC has to be able to influence the development of design as a key element in business promotion and innovation policies and offer advice to other business promotion actors on the value of using design.

The idea behind the DDC’s competence model is not to hire and develop employees to match the particular profiles but rather to take a strategic approach to ensuring an optimal competence mix. In other words, one member of the DDC’s staff may cover several competence requirements (e.g. design and communication or business and policy making). In future hiring processes, we will focus on competence areas that are not currently adequately covered. In addition, there will be a focus on strategic
ORGANISATION
HOW SHOULD THE DDC BE LED AND MANAGED?

The DDC’s top leadership is a board comprised of members with specific personal qualifications from business, industry and design (including industrial design, communication design and service design) that contribute to the DDC’s mission. In addition, the DDC has an international advisory board. Day-to-day leadership is handled by the chief executive.
Figure 5. The DDC’s organisation.
ACHIEVING AND MEASURING EFFECTS

The DDC has a clear focus on documenting the effect of the experiments and learning and sharing activities that are carried out. Given the complex context for companies’ design and innovation efforts and the lack of clarity about the practical workings of their internal design organisation and management, effect indicators often need to be established as hypotheses rather than clear-cut parameters. The implementation of DDC programmes therefore involves determining meaningful effect indicators and gathering data to document them. With regard to the implementation, it is important to understand that it is up to the companies and actors themselves to implement any insights, concepts and solutions resulting from the effort.

The DDC aims to ensure continuous systematic documentation, learning and feedback from the effect created by prototypes, programmes and scaling initiatives. Over time, this will enable more precise ambitions and expectations concerning the effect.
Figure 6. Generating and measuring effect in DDC initiatives.
The DDC is part of Design Society, the coordinating and impactful platform for growth initiatives within design and fashion in Denmark. The Design Society aims to promote design, fashion and related creative industries with a view to promoting growth, marketing Denmark and contributing to the solution of the challenges facing society at large.

The DDC’s general role is to help the actors within Design Society to act with synergy and maximum impact by virtue of the joint platform, also in connection with collaborations with the market, companies and other external actors. The DDC aims to be a driving force in the development of Design Society and sees a great potential for achieving a coordinated strategic direction in publicly funded efforts within design and fashion. Design Society is a key actor in the effort to build critical mass and strong links among national, regional and locale business promotion efforts for design and fashion. As part of that effort, the DDC takes responsibility for developing and implementing relevant tools for measuring and managing the impact of the Design Society’s overall efforts and the achieved results.

**Figure 7. Design Society.**
Photo: Seminar on the development of the DDC’s strategy.
Realdania, the Ministry of Business and Growth and the City of Copenhagen have joined forces in building a hub for architecture, construction, urban development and design in the new BLOX complex and the adjacent complex ‘Fæstningens Materialgård’. The ambition is to make the a magnet for new application-oriented knowledge and innovation, a leading platform for communication, debate and exhibitions and a two-way gateway for exports and international dialogue.

The DDC relocated to Fæstningens Materialgård in 2015 and became part of the so-called pilot hub involved in shaping the hub for architecture, construction, urban development and design. The DDC will make an active effort to establish common activities and a shared strategic direction to ensure that design plays a prominent role at BLOX and in the innovation hub.