Danish
Design Centre

Attachment 2

A NEW TYPOLOGY FOR THE NORDIC DESIGN RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION

The typology for the Nordic design resource is developed to provide an up-to-date definition of the design resource in the Nordic countries. The definition is to serve as the starting point for a comprehensive mapping of the design resource, with the aim of better understanding the people constituting the design resource as well as the professional environment they act in.

This note is an introduction to the new typology of the design resource in the Nordic countries of today, as developed by Danish Design Centre, Design and Architecture Norway (DOGA), Design Forum Finland, Iceland Design Centre and Swedish Industrial Design Foundation (SVID).

The typology is based on extensive qualitative research conducted across the Nordic countries in the period from September 2017 to April 2018. The research included 40+ interviews with key actors in the design ecosystem, desk research about design practice and education, as well as two workshops engaging all the project partners in discussions and analysis of the design industry.

The present typology thus builds on the dominating perception within the design ecosystem of the Nordic countries, for the purpose of including the newest thoughts, trends and potentials.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Defining design

Design is "a systematic, creating process. The process is visual and experimental, and it has people's experiences and behavior as its focal point. The results can be graphical or physical products, new services, systems or business models." (C. Bason, Shape the Future, 2016).

Defining resource

In this project, the starting point is the individual person, and the term resource implies an individual person with design competencies, which are being or can be brought to use.

THE DESIGN RESOURCE IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The design resource in the Nordic countries is defined as follows:

The professionals comprising the design resource are characterised by their design-driven approach and methods. Some of these professionals have acquired their skills through formal training within the design domain, while others have acquired them through experience and perhaps continuing training in the field.

When asked what defines the design resource in the Nordic countries, the vast majority of our interviewees (35 of the 42) expressed that the professionals constituting the design resource are characterised by their mind-set and approach to problem solving and creating new solutions.

"If a person handles and structures the process of solving a problem according to design methodology, he can be said to be a design resource."
- Senior Advisor @ Public general business promoter, Norway

"The ways in which you approach problem solving determines whether you are a designer or not."
- Founder & CEO @ Private professional design sector, Finland

Moreover, most interviewees distinguished more or less explicitly between formally trained designers and professionals educated within other domains who nonetheless have a design mind-set and work design-driven. However, both groups of professionals constitute equally important parts of the design resource, creating value on the basis of their design-driven approach and methods.

"There are two angles to defining "designers": problems versus people. If we start with people, we think of the educated designers; artistically educated first and foremost, but also people with a design engineering background for example. But there is an enormous amount of people who work with design problems; these can be educated within other fields than design and could be anthropologists for example."
- Professor and rector @ Public design education, Sweden

"The project is often broader than the design task itself. You will need more and broader resources and focusing on teams instead of just 'the designer'."
- Design Lead @ Private Design User company, Norway

"If we determined the design resource only by formal education, we would be looking to the past instead of focusing on the future."
- Programme Director for MA in Design @ Public design education, Iceland

Numerous quotes support the definition of the design resource as stated in the beginning of this section; see the 'Methodology and findings' section for further details.

The definition of the design resource implies two things. First, that a design-driven approach and design methodologies tie together the design resource. Second, that the people constituting the design resource have a myriad of different backgrounds; yet generally a distinction is made between professionals with formal training within the design domain and professionals with other backgrounds. These implications will be addressed in the following sections.

The design-driven approach and methods

Danish Design Centre defines the design-driven approach as being user-driven, holistic, future oriented and multidisciplinary (https://danskdesigncenter.dk/da/din-modellen); experimental, visual and tactile (C. Bason, Shape the Future, 2016). In other words, it involves working experimentally in multidisciplinary

teams employing visual and tactile tools, with the purpose of creating future-oriented solutions for and with the people for whom the solution is created.

The design-driven approach involves specific processes and methods. According to Tim Brown of IDEO, the approach can be seen as having three more or less overlapping phases; inspiration, ideation, and implementation ("Design thinking", article in Harvard Business Review in June 2008). The approach has also been described by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University, commonly known as the d.school, as an iterative loop of actions and methods involving empathising, definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing (https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/getting-started-with-design-thinking).

The design-driven approach to creating new solutions is what ties together the professionals constituting the design resource.

Professionals with formal training within the design domain

Historically, formal design training and education was offered by design schools, and the professionals trained there would be 'designers'. However, as the field has developed and the demand for design competencies increased, the offerings of formal design education have exploded. Equally, the job title of 'designer' (or variations of it) has been given to professionals with rather diverse specialisations, and this in itself calls for a new mapping of the field.

Across the Nordic countries, a large number of design educations (140+) have been identified. Some of these are taught by the design schools, but an increasing amount are offered by universities and other higher education schools. The duration, subject matter and level of abstraction (specialist vs. generalist) of the educational tracks may vary, however they all teach skills, competencies and knowledge within the domain of design.

All professionals of working age with formal design training - either from the 140+ current design educations or from previously offered design educations - are seen as part of the design resource, reason being that they all possess the design-mind-set as well as skills, competencies and knowledge within the design domain.
Whether or not the professional is actively practicing or engaged with design in her everyday life is of less importance with regard to this mapping; we perceive the 'inactive' design-trained professionals as latent parts of the design resource.

How to map the design resource with formal design education?
The group/category of formally educated design resources (both active and inactive in the design industry) can be found in alumni network and/or records of previous graduates of the respective higher education schools offering design education.
Alternatively, they ought to be included in publicly available statistics and registers of employment, and most likely via LinkedIn or other online professional communities as well.

Professionals who are not formally trained within the design domain

This group of professionals has either adopted the design mind-set and methods through experience, through their own "upskilling" activities, or through continuing training (e.g. executive education). This group/category of professionals constitute the design resource on equal footing with the formally design-trained professionals.
The professionals who have adopted the design mind-set and methods through experience and/or their own "upskilling" activities (e.g. personal studies of design literature) have done so without it being recorded or registered. If they fulfil design functions, however, they are explicitly part of the design resource.

In the cases where these professionals do not fulfil design functions yet work consistently design-driven in other types of positions (e.g. facilitator of innovation processes), they are included in this group based on their subjective understanding of themselves as part of the design resource.

How to map the design resource not trained within the design domain?
We hypothesise that many of the design resources with no formal training in the design domains nonetheless fulfil design functions. These professionals can be found in publicly available statistics and registers of employment, and most likely via LinkedIn and other online professional communities as well.

The professionals who possess a design mind-set and work altogether design-driven, but do not fulfil design functions, are obviously the most difficult to identify and map. Some of them may not be possible to map, however our hypothesis is that a great part of this group of professionals do express somehow their "belonging" to the design resource. This might be via LinkedIn, online professional communities and/or personal websites, and this could therefore be the starting point for finding them.

A new categorisation of design disciplines

With the purpose of making the design resource more understandable and approachable, we have developed a new categorisation of design disciplines. The new categorisation is to represent both previous and current design education and practice, and is based on classical, current and future waves and trends within the industry. All professionals fulfilling positions within these disciplines are part of the design resource.

We arrived at 9 new disciplines by analysing existing categorisations of design disciplines, crossing the revised list of disciplines with the entire list of design educations offered today, and simultaneously crossing it with design-related profession titles used in the design field (via LinkedIn).

The 9 disciplines are:

Graphic and visual design
Digital design (e.g. design of digital platforms, apps and websites)
Styling of products and/or services (physical/tactile appearance)
Product development (conceptualization)
Service design

Management/facilitation of development processes
Design/user research
Strategic design
Experience design

All professionals constituting the design resource should feel that they belong to one or several disciplines, and many sub-disciplines can be listed under these groupings.

Moreover, we hypothesise that the design disciplines of today can be seen as distributed across a grid such as the one below.
One axis represents a continuum ranging from a tactical to strategic subject matter, and the other a continuum ranging from a physical to a digital subject matter (or medium).
This, however, is a hypothesis, and only on the basis of the collected data on the design resource will we know whether this grid applies to the design resource and the disciplines it comprises.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Developing a new typology

This project is inherently based on design thinking principles, meaning that the process is exploring, iterative, visual and user-centred.
Initially, the project also called for considerations regarding taking an inductive or deductive approach to data collection and analysis. Due to running several iterations of data collection in the typology development phase, it was possible to employ both approaches throughout the phase. The first iterations in this phase involved desk research on the basis of initial hypotheses, the next involved data collection and "condensation" into new hypotheses, the next again involved re-testing these new hypotheses in various ways.

Concretely, in this phase we have employed an explorative and user-centred approach to arriving at a new typology for the design resource by involving key stakeholders from the Nordic design ecosystem in a number of interviews and work meetings.
From October 2017 to February 2018, 42 people across all the Nordic countries participated in these discussions, distributed over 23 interviews and seven work meetings (2-3 interviewees per meeting). All parts of the design ecosystem were represented; that is design education, the professional design sector, design users, design promotion, design actors, and policy makers. All the interviewees were C-level or managers; 22 were from the public sector and 20 from the private sector; and 23 are educated from a design school, 19 have other backgrounds.

All interviews and work meetings followed roughly the same procedure and involved structured yet open discussions led by the interviewers from the respective Nordic Design Resource partner organisations, a testing of five hypotheses for determining the design resource formulated on the basis of the results of a Kick Off workshop, as well as a persona exercise testing six different personas developed to challenge attitudes and biases in a visual and tangible manner.
The idea was to maintain the open approach and not guide the participants towards particular definitions, however challenging their points of view was encouraged (and welcomed by the participants themselves).

To provide the reader with an idea of the participants' views, listed below are a number of quotes which served as the starting point for the development of the present typology:

"To put it simply, the way you approach problem solving [defines whether you a design resource or not]".
- Founder & CEO, Chief Strategist @ Private professional design sector, Finland

"[The design resource should be defined by the employing of a] holistic approach to solving problems. The use of design-methods is becoming more widespread and more professionals embrace them without knowing the core of them. The core competence is important."
- Board members @ Private Professional design sector association, Norway

"A design resource is one who possesses the strategic, processual design competencies. You are not necessarily a design resource just because you contribute to a design project - this implies that all designers are not necessarily design resources."
- Account Director @ Public Design Actor agency, Denmark

"Design is a practice; you have certain structures and work with certain processes, targeted towards achieving certain results. This 'package' makes one a designer. A design resource is anyone who contributes significantly to a design process and does it with a design mind-set."
- Professor and Rector @ Public design education, Sweden

"[The traditional designers are obviously part of the design resource], but we should look at the resource in a wider context. People who have the understanding of design thinking could also be design resources."
- Consultant and associate partner @ Private professional design sector organisation, Iceland

"In my organisation, every student with a design education is a designer. But you could be a great designer without having a formal education within design. It has something to do with a certain way of thinking and viewing the world, something with a visual and aesthetic orientation."
- Director of Development @ Private professional design sector organisation, Denmark

"It's important to focus on teams of different competencies and not only design. Designers today are involved in problem-solving in teams. These team-members are then design resources." - Design Lead @ Private Design User company, Norway

"Whereas a designer exists in the micro view, the design resource is the macro view which allows for different ways of viewing the field of design professionals."
- CEO @ Public Design Actor agency, Denmark

Operationalisation of the typology

At the heart of this project is the observation that the design disciplines that are currently included in statistics of the design field in the Nordic countries are insufficient and not representative of the actual field. This led us to dive into the question of categorisation early in the process of developing a new typology; it was essential that the new typology would include the entire actual design field of today with all its disciplines and specialisations.

We looked into previous categorisations of design disciplines with the aim of identifying pros and cons with regards to specific categories. As we found that most were insufficient, we decided to develop our own categorisation. We did so with the designbasen.no/designbasen.dk categorisations as our starting point, but with some corrections, and ended up with 9 disciplines as described in the section 'A new categorisation of the design resource'. This categorisation takes competencies as their starting point rather than professional titles, making it possible to generalise broadly across the many disciplines found in the design industry today.
Professionals working within these categories of design competencies are all seen as being part of the design resource.

The next phase involved testing whether the 9 disciplines are sufficient to cover the entire design field. We did so in two phases; first by conducting simple desk research identifying all design educations offered in the Nordic countries and sorting them under the new disciplines. Secondly by identifying via LinkedIn the various design-related profession titles used in the design field.

During the first phase, we used 'Uddannelses Guiden', www.ug.dk, as a source for identifying the educations offered in Denmark. When using 'design' as the search keyword, all educations with the word 'design' in their title or in the description of their content or purpose were displayed. All listed educations were then cross-checked via their respective websites with the aim of establishing whether design processes, methodologies and tools actually play a role in the educational course or whether the word 'design' merely covers aspects of creation, planning, sketching or similar.

Via this method, we found that there are 140+ design educations in Denmark alone; some offered by the traditional design schools, but the majority scattered throughout other educational institutions – mainly universities, but also professional university colleges – across the country.
Having completed this iteration of research, the same research was done in the other partner countries.
We found that all identified educations could be categorised in terms of the 9 disciplines, however, many educational tracks are interdisciplinary to a degree that places them in multiple categories.

On the basis of our 9 disciplines and our definition of design per se, some of the listed educations could be deselected as they do not involve any design methods or tools, even though they are offered by the design schools and/or have the word 'design' in their titles.

To test the categories further, we conducted another round of desk research, this time identifying the various design-related profession titles used in the design field, as well as looking into individual 'paths' to becoming a design resource. This involved a small scale random test via LinkedIn. Looking up the first 25 first profiles of each discipline and listing their titles as well as their formal education gave us insights to the width of the field and the path to becoming a design resource.

Although the profession titles vary greatly and seemingly outnumber the educational design disciplines, we believe that our categorisation of the disciplines cover sufficiently the past, current and future trends within the design field.

Next phase

This typology will serve as qualitative foundation for the quantitative mapping of the design resource planned to be completed by September 2018.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Danish Design Centre promotes 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.

Design and Architecture Norway (DOGA) is a driving force for sustainable value creation through design and architecture. They facilitate collaboration between creative talents and businesses.

Design Forum Finland is the promotion organization of Finnish design. Their mission is to support affluence and competitiveness in the economy and society by promoting widespread utilization of design.

Iceland Design Centre promotes design of all kinds as a vital and profitable aspect of the Icelandic economy, and thus to enhance competitiveness and economic gain.

Swedish Industrial Design Foundation (SVID) works to disseminate knowledge about design as a force for development and a competitive device.

Funding partner

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