Innovating with People

Unleashing the Potential of Civic Design

Christian Bason, *Ph.D., CEO*
Danish Design Center

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In your experience, what is the unique contribution of civic design?

'It was an eye-opener.'

Anne Lind, Director General
Quoted in Leading Public Design (2017)

'Civic design
is challenging because it
involves something more than
just managing change. It
involves discovering what kind
of change is needed.'
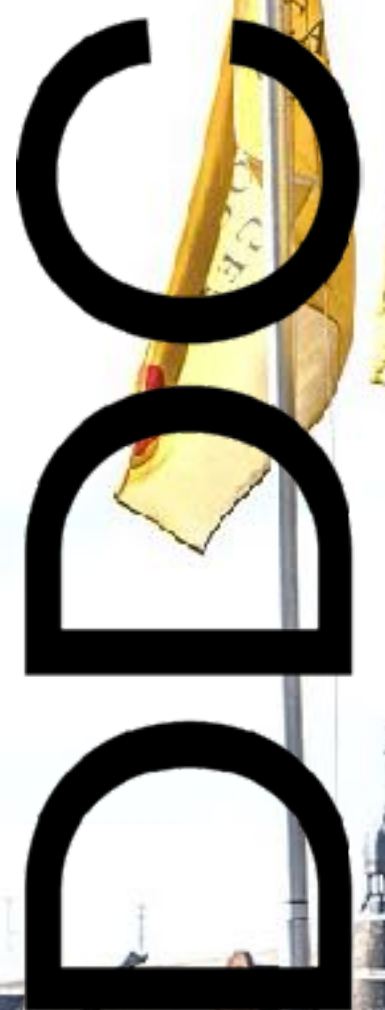
The global context is *challenging*

Citizen demands are *changing*

Civic institutions need to *respond better*

Placing *people* at the heart of the creation and realisation of policies and services.

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With design we unleash people's ability to create a sustainable world.
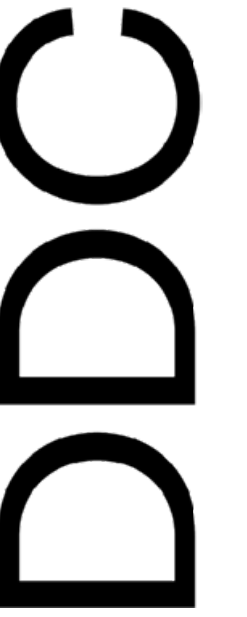
Innovating public services by design

The Rise of Civic Design
Growing the Field

'These are not the best days for bureaucracy. Everywhere its demise is reported, demanded, and, more often than not, celebrated.'

Paul du Gay
In Praise of Bureaucracy (2000)

Civic design is...

Challenging: Asking "why?"
Re-imagining public problems & opportunities

Human: Starting with citizens and communities
Understanding drivers of behaviour

Experimental: Trying things out
Prototyping as a vehicle for learning

Concrete: Making the future tangible
Visualising to enable dialogue and collaboration

Explore the problem
Up close to daily practices and context of living.

Co-creation
Ideas are best created together with citizens, stakeholders and other actors.

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Experiment early
Create tangible futures through prototypes

MindLab

A journey of design in government

"Reforming government is hard and often boring work. The innovation labs are making it a bit faster and a lot more interesting."
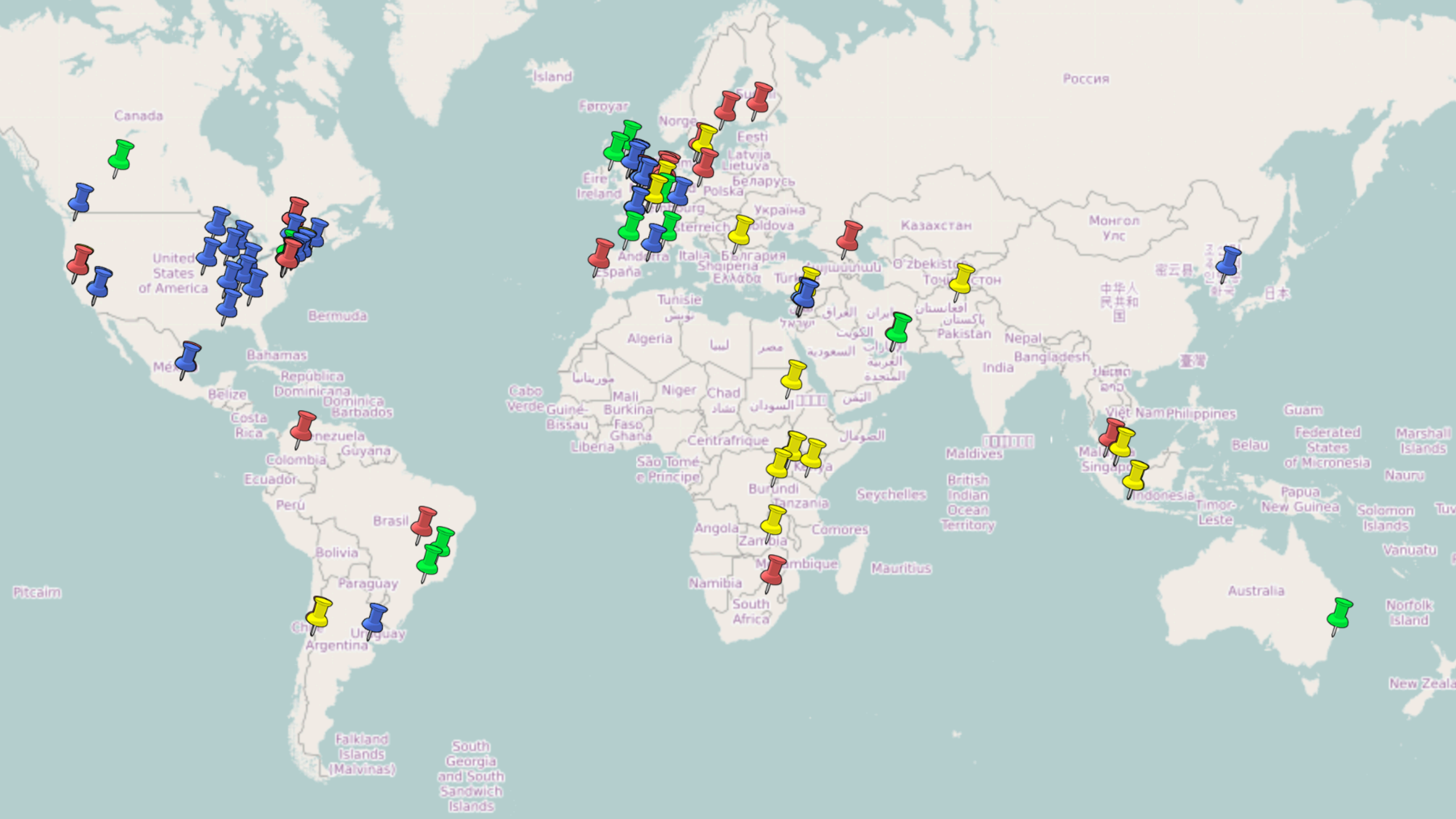
The Economist, 2014

Massive growth in civic design over the past two decades.
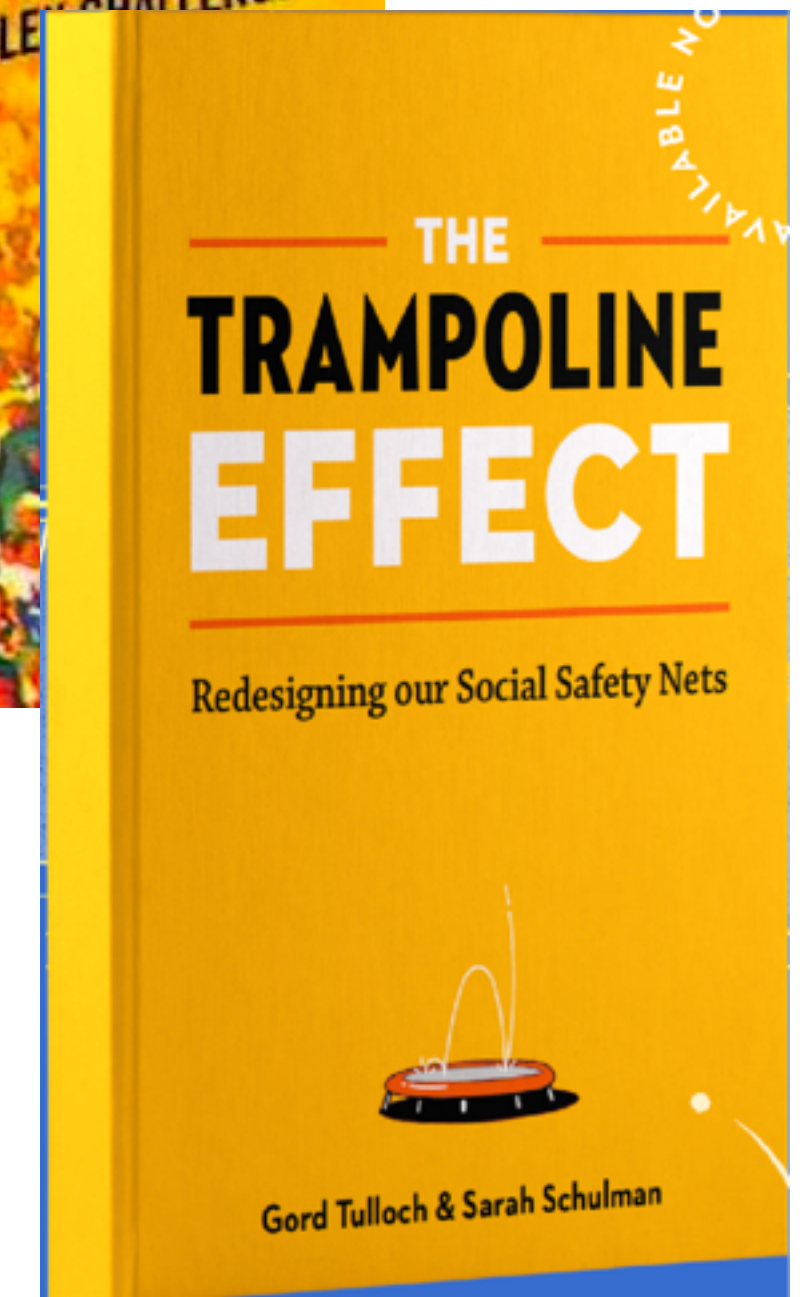
Civic design
Areas of application

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- Health
- Social services
- Digital services
- Enterprise services
- Taxation
- Justice
- Immigration
- Funding programs...

The opportunity:

Radically improving citizen experience, creating more civic value

Process

- Insights into citizen experience

- Ownership and commitment

- Opportunities for co-production

- Iterate and de-risk interventions

Value

- More meaningful service experiences

- Higher productivity

- Achieving policy outcomes

- Democratic accountability

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The pitfalls:

Ensuring long-term capacity and commitment for service design

- How to obtain the first experiences?

- How to achieve management buy-in?

- Where to find and build the right competencies?

- How to document and share results?

- How to create understanding of the value of the approach across the organisation?

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Can design + bureaucracy reconcile?

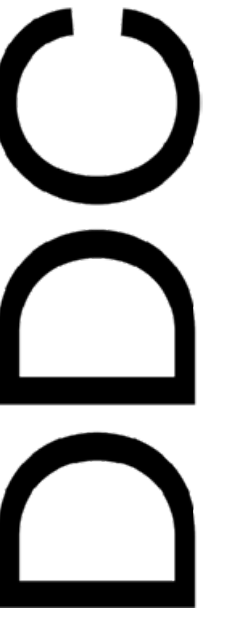# Three motives for public managers to use service design for the first time

- Performance pressure
- Personal vision
- Opportunity to use a new approach

Bureaucracy vs human governance

	Bureaucratic governance	Human-centred governance
Citizens	Formal rules Impersonal	Relational Subjective
Organization	Division of responsibility Management hierarchy Clear specification	Networked Loosely coupled Underspecified
Processes	Transactional Top-down Unambiguous	Interactive Bottom-up Ambiguous
Theory of knowledge	Objective Categorical	Reflective Perceptional

Bason & Austin
Design in the Public Sector: Towards a Human Centered Model of Governance (2021)

10 years after first encountering civic design:

Do managers still believe?

Design in the public sector: Toward a human centred model of public governance

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, design has emerged as an approach to shaping public policies and services. However, how design works in the public sector has not been rigorously studied. This paper analyses 15 cases of design in the public sector to arrive at a theoretical characterization of design in the public sector that aligns with descriptions in non-public settings, with some differences. We also consider whether public design practices might signal the emergence of human centred models of public governance that offer new openings for creative influences and serve as a constructive counterbalance to more bureaucratic and analytical traditions.

KEYWORDS Design; human-centred design; design thinking; public design; public governance; public management

Introduction

In recent years, public sector managers have turned increasingly to *design* for service development, delivery and innovation (Parker and Heapy 2006; Bate and Robert 2007; Shove et al. 2007; Bason 2010, 2013; Boyer, Cook, and Steinberg 2011; Cooper and Junginger 2011; Manzini and Staszowski 2013; Ansell and Torfing 2014; Bason 2014). Design in these contexts is considered not in terms of building (architectural) design, object (industrial) design or space, city and urban planning, but rather as a way of thinking about intentional processes for creating societal change. In the past few years, many countries have set up 'labs' or 'centres' (Bason 2013; Hassan 2014; Nesta 2014; The Economist 2014; McGann, Wells, and Blomkamp 2021) to create value for citizens in education, employment, the environment, finance and taxation, health care, mental health and social care (Parker and Heapy 2006; Meroni and Sangiorgi 2011; Polaine, Løvlie, and Reason 2013; Bason 2014; Manzini 2015; Osborne 2021).

Enthusiasm for alternative approaches derives in part from growing financial pressures (Bourgon 2011; European Commission 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Osborne and Brown 2013; Christiansen 2014). Additional impetus arises from increased concerns about major social challenges, such as climate change, healthcare for ageing populations, growing migration, unemployment among young people and increasing income disparities. Proposed responses to such challenges almost always call for more

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After 10 years: Yes, they still believe!

- If approaches were discontinued, it was for "mundane" reasons

- Service solutions largely lived on

- Managers continue to deploy design

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'It worked really well. We reduced homelessness by 50 percent.'

Manager, local government (UK)

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'The approach works as a catalyst and demonstration of a very different kind of practice.'

Manager, non-profit service provider (AUS)

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'It is the design process that is strong. We must keep designing new solutions, and realize they will at some point be terminated. Then we design the next.

Manager, social institution (DK)

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Can empathy and bureaucracy co-exist?

'Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's place, but it is not the same as taking on their emotions. Design is a way to nuance our understanding, as bureaucrats, of the full range of "rationality" in citizens' behavior.'

Manager, state, business policy (DK)

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'It is a fake contradiction.'

Manager in social care (DK)

The Future of Civic Design
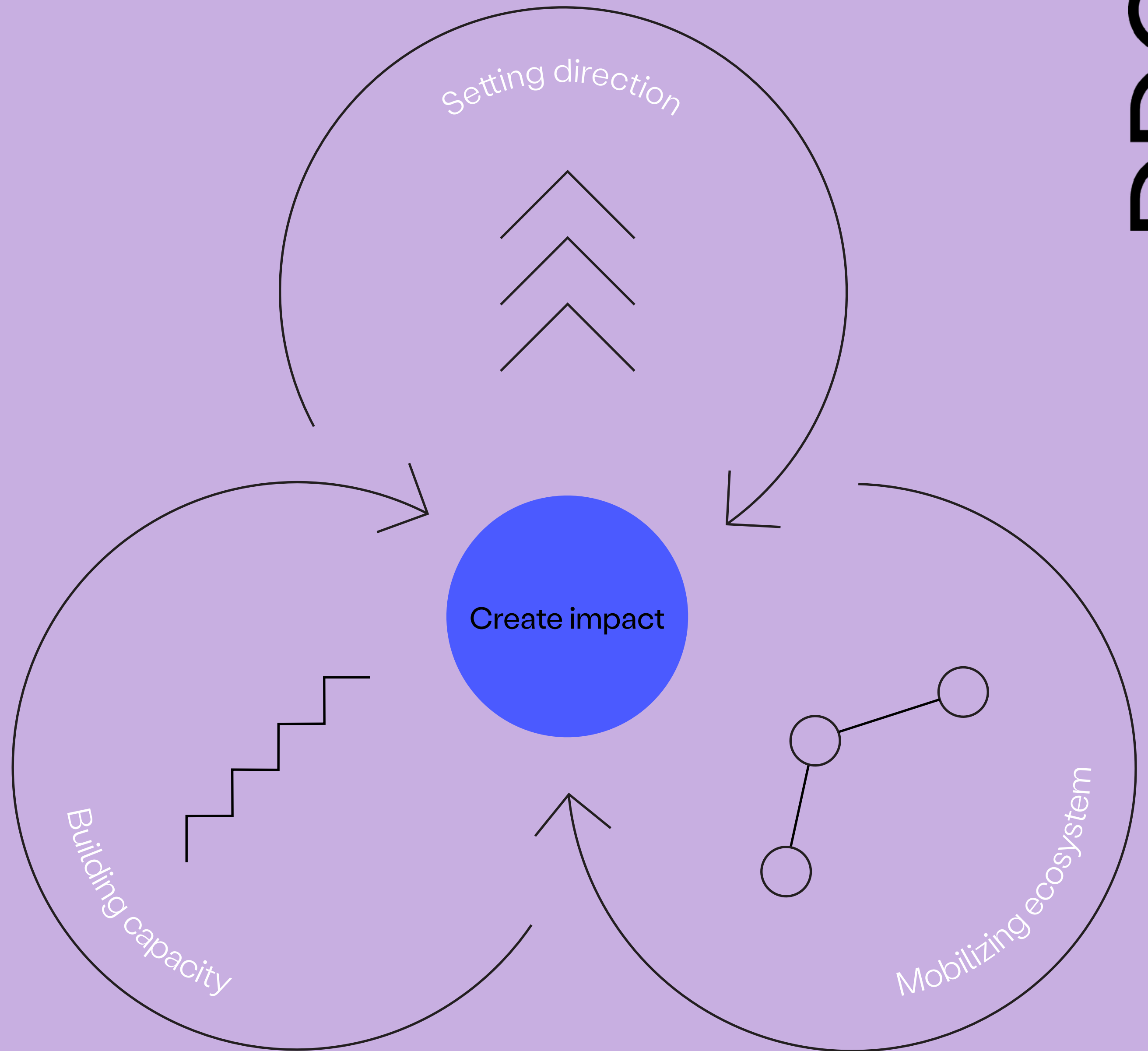## Four Directions

1
More systemic design

Mission-oriented innovation
Taking on problems worth solving
Cross-sector, cross-level, cross
discipline

Mission Playbook

Set direction
Mobilize ecosystem
Build capacity

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Setting direction

Create impact

Building capacity

Mobilizing ecosystem

2
Ethics & inclusion

Just because we can, should we?
Placing humans before tech
Engaging the marginalised stories and voices

PROJECT

The Digital Ethics Compass: How do we develop ethical technology?

The project and design tool The Digital Ethics Compass empowers businesses to use ethics as a competitive advantage

THIS PROJECT IS A PART OF OUR THEME
DIGITAL TRANSITION

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3
From humans to life

Regenerative design
Beyond systemic to ecosystems
Creating with all living things in
mind

New European Bauhaus: How do we design the irresistible circular society?

Through the New European Bauhaus initiative, we will accelerate the green transition and create a circular society that is truly irresistible

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GREEN TRANSITION

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4
Designing the next organisation

Imagining and realising the self-managing organisation
Unleashing human creativity and energy *every day*

What do we believe about people?

A set of assumptions about our colleagues drive every strategic and organisational decision.

We believe that people

- Thrive by trust and recognition

- Grow when they have influence

- Want to make a difference

- Will take responsibility

- Can lead and can follow

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Profile of the next organisation

Elements of a human-centred workplace.

Working at the Danish Design Center

- Everyone chooses their personal leader

- Everyone can offer their leadership

- Everyone freely chooses their professional area of work

- No fixed departments or teams. Instead : Task/project-based teams

- Procedures and polices aren't formulated before the need arises.

- Tasks not defined by position but by roles.

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Now what?
The hand and the mind

Tools and Toolkits

We've gathered some of the most efficient and thoroughly tested tools and toolkits that you can use in your work and as a source of inspiration. Everyone can use the tools and they can be customized to fit your needs. Ready, set, go!

Danish Design Center

ALL TOOLS AND TOOLKITS   TOOLS   DESIGNING YOUR CIRCULAR TRANSITION   SCENARIO KIT   DISTRIBUTED DESIGN   MISSIONS PLAYBOOK

CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODEL   THE DIGITAL ETHICS COMPASS

'I believe the design approach is the only way the public sector can be developed in ways that make sense for citizens'.

Manager in social care (DK)

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How do we create even more impact through civic design

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