Digital Futures: New work platform in Danish Design Centre

Launching new platform: Digital Futures

DIGITAL FUTURES: Human-centered new technology (Following) ⊠⁺

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As Danish Design Centre's engine room for digitization and experiments with new technology, Digital Futures positions design as a human-centric tool that turn new tech trends into real opportunities for Danish businesses and organisations.

If there is one thing currently changing and shaping our future it's digitization and the new waves of new technology that challenge the way we create, generate value, do business and live our lives — as well as the way we interact with each other and the

world around us. Disruption is the most commonly used word to characterise this development, and it aptly specifies digitisation as something we all need to address.

Often, however, it can be difficult to know how to deal with the new technologies and the changes they imply. Artificial intelligence, 3D-printing, open source currents, automation and robotics are just some of the concepts we have to contend with. But how? The answer is strategic design methods. Design is the one tool that makes the abstract concrete, and the difficult a little easier. Design is the strategic and tactical approach that lets us turn disruption and digitization from threat to opportunity.

In other words, Digital Futures confronts disruption with design to turn the valence around: By applying design we can take a proactive approach towards digitization instead of adopting a reactive position: The very term 'disruption' implies an inescapable wave washing over us. But it does not have to be that way. Design methods allow us to reclaim control and enable us to examine the digital field through experimentation, focusing our approaches on the end-user, testing ideas in the marketplace by means of prototyping, iterative processes and a clear determination to learn from real-world experiences. Scepticism turns to curiosity, and digitization is no longer a matter of survival but of the systematic endeavour to make the most of the new opportunities and maintaining our edge.

Above all, Digital Futures is about giving digitisation a human perspective and making sure that, in our fascination with new technologies and their development, we always remember to put people first as we develop new solutions. Our lives should shape technology, not the other way around. That is the only approach that will allow us to shape a future that we are all going to want to inhabit and which will contain us all. Digital Futures thus takes a critical stance to new technologies and naturally embeds themes such as privacy, transparency, sustainability, democracy and equality into our vision for the future. The key is to make sure that digitisation is based on digital trust and security.

Specifically, the current activities on the Digital Futures platform are shaped by the following four working questions:

- **What will digitally driven future business models look like?** As the way we

generate value changes as a result of digitization, the business models that drive development change as well. Concepts such as the sharing economy, crowd-sourcing, crowd-funding, open source and circular economies are just some of the new phenomena that have recently been added to our palette of opportunities, and which pave the way for many more innovative digital possibilities that might fundamentally alter the premises for the ways in which competitive business models can be shaped.

- **How can we generate new world-class digital ideas, inventions and solutions?**Technology not only enables rapid idea development but also makes it possible to use prototyping to test these ideas rapidly and thus bring them to market faster. How can we experiment in real time in society and optimize conditions for co-creation processes that involve companies, private citizens and the public sector? How do we promote the establishment and strengthening of creative environments and networks? And how can these conditions help bring about solutions that naturally place Danish actors in the lead on the international scene?

- **How can we bring big data into play more effectively and create a strong digital commons?** Data is the lifeblood of digitization and already drives some of the world's large-scale digital solutions. At the same time, however, we have only begun to scratch the surface when it comes to the potential of data-driven solutions and, not least, the possibilities that result from the creation of digital commons with open data, open technologies and freely available tools. How can we bring big data into play more effectively in business and industry as a part of new solutions and inventions?

- **What is the future human-machine interface?** As digital solutions fuse with humans and our environment, for example in the form of wearables, the Internet of Things and screen-less interactions, we face a growing need to find new ways to link design and technology. How do we make this development human-centred, and how do we develop this human-machine symbiosis in a way that builds a future where we would want to live?

Digital Futures is constantly keeping its finger on the technological pulse with real-time

experiments. This unfolds in cooperation with a wide range of Danish companies as well as organisations in Denmark and abroad, which make up an active, explorative network of actors that are either on the cutting edge of digitization or wish to be. Together, we tackle real-life challenge in broad partnerships and active experiments to pave a clear way ahead for companies' digitisation and use of new ground-breaking technologies.

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