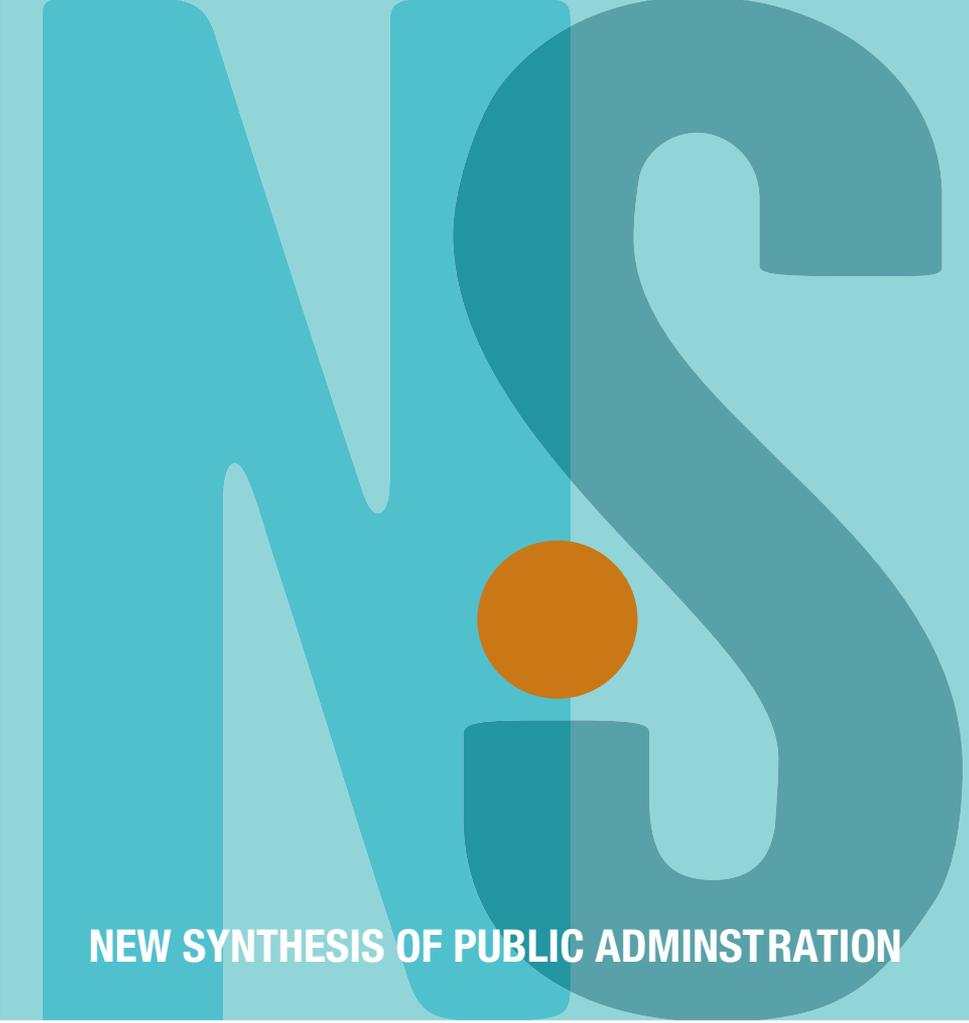


# **NS LIVE CASE SERIES 2017: KOLDING – WE DESIGN FOR LIFE**

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**NEW SYNTHESIS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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# The Context

In 2010, the Municipality of Kolding, located in Southern Denmark, launched a process to define the future of the municipality. The city was facing the challenge of an aging population as skilled younger citizens were deserting the city.<sup>1</sup> Despite having two universities of design and an international business academy, few students or lecturers chose to settle in Kolding.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the financial crisis exposed a vulnerable business infrastructure due to a large group of companies working in the field of transportation and logistics.

The Mayor and the Town Council launched a survey to understand the reputation of Kolding among the Danish population.<sup>3</sup> The survey showed that while Kolding was well-known for key its landmarks, including a 700 year old castle named Koldinghus and for the universities it hosts, “20% of the respondents would not recommend others to live or work in the city”.<sup>4</sup>

This finding fuelled a review of how the city was organized and branded.<sup>5</sup> Recognizing the need for change, the Major and Town Council launched a five-stage process to define the future of the Municipality of Kolding.

In 2012, a new vision for Kolding was approved by the Town Council: “We Design for Life - Together we design options for a good life through entrepreneurship, social innovation and education”.<sup>6</sup> The vision was developed through a design-based process that encouraged co-creation and citizen engagement. The new vision provides a map for thinking about Kolding’s long-term goal of becoming a “full-scale Design Thinking community by 2022”.<sup>7</sup>

## Building a New Vision for Kolding

Faced with the challenge of developing a new strategy to attract citizens and ensure Kolding’s long-term prosperity, the Municipality of Kolding set out to develop a new vision for Kolding’s future. Led by the Mayor, the Municipality decided that to tackle its reputational challenge, the Municipality would need to ‘re-brand’ itself in a way that engaged and attracted citizens.

In essence, Kolding needed a ‘marketing strategy’ to drive innovation and ensure its long-term prosperity. This was admittedly a radical approach with many risks. Once a new vision was developed, there would be no turning back.

1 Guy Julier, *Economies of Design* (London: Sage Publications, 2017), 160.

2 Julier, *Economies of Design*, 160.

3 Ulrik Jungersen and Poul Kyvsgaard Hansen, “Designing a Municipality” (presentation, NordDesign Conference on Creating Together, Espoo, Finland, August 27-29, 2014).

4 Ulrik Jungersen and Poul Kyvsgaard Hansen, “Designing a Municipality”.

5 Kolding Kommune, “Kolding - We design for life”, [https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om\\_kommunen/Design/viden\\_artikler/Summay\\_af\\_ESPA\\_ans%C3%B8gning\\_-\\_European\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Award\\_2015.pdf](https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om_kommunen/Design/viden_artikler/Summay_af_ESPA_ans%C3%B8gning_-_European_Public_Sector_Award_2015.pdf) (accessed April 9, 2017).

6 Kolding Kommune, “Kolding - We design for life”.

7 Kolding Kommune, “Kolding - We design for life”.

# Kolding's Vision by Design

Kolding's approach to developing a new vision took place in five stages and was grounded in a design-driven process. Design thinking and a design-driven vision process was the 'obvious choice' in the Kolding context, as design had already been a point of orientation for Kolding in the municipality's previous vision. Kolding is well-known for its design school and its design-applying businesses. When the University of Southern Denmark chose to move all the university's design-related study programmes to Kolding in 2012, it gave the municipality even more reason to offer the vision process to a design agency instead of a traditional consultancy.

Design was used in the development process to guarantee citizen involvement and an outside-in perspective. The politicians in Kolding generally wished to give the citizens an experience of having actual democratic influence on the development of the city. Design thinking manifested itself as an effective tool for situational and occasional dissolution of potentially rigid systems, which can be a precondition for innovation in the public sector. Similarly, design thinking is largely associated with innovation and thus with the underlying public agenda to redesign the public section and the ambition to 'work smarter'.

The first phase of Kolding's process was launched in 2010. This phase involved framing the challenges and goals of the municipality for the future.<sup>8</sup> This stage took place in 2010 and included the survey to understand how Kolding was viewed by others. In addition, Stagis, a Copenhagen-based consultancy was hired to lead the process of vision development.

The second phase involved "outlining the authentic strengths of Kolding Municipality" and used a series of in-depth interviews with citizens, representatives from educational institutions and members of the business community.<sup>9</sup> Desk research was used to provide additional context surrounding past strategies and actions used by the Municipality. This process highlighted six key areas that could become the base of future development: design, education and knowledge, entrepreneurship and enterprise, volunteering, social commitment and community, culture and attractions, and nature and location.



The third phase involved "scenario-building with key opinion leaders". Beginning in June 2012, the process built upon findings from the previous stages and involved conducting "a workshop with the politicians of Kolding Municipal Council whose objective was to clarify the ambitions and goals for the process as well as the challenges that the vision was to confront".<sup>10</sup> As

8 Ulrik Jungersen and Poul Kyvsgaard Hansen, "Designing a Municipality" (presentation, NordDesign Conference on Creating Together, Espoo, Finland, August 27-29, 2014), p.3.

9 Kolding Kommune, "Kolding - We design for life", [https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om\\_kommunen/Design/viden\\_artikler/Summay\\_af\\_ESPA\\_ans%C3%B8gning\\_-\\_European\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Award\\_2015.pdf](https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om_kommunen/Design/viden_artikler/Summay_af_ESPA_ans%C3%B8gning_-_European_Public_Sector_Award_2015.pdf) (accessed April 9, 2017), p. 3.

10 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, "Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration," *The Finnish Journal of Urban Studies*, 52 (2014).

part of the process, politicians discussed ways to cultivate Kolding’s image to ensure that the new vision served as a “beacon for the entire community”.<sup>11</sup>



During this phase, four of the key areas identified in phase two were used to develop ‘future scenarios’ for a “creative workshop, where local representatives from business, education, public institutions and associations, along with the municipal council, were invited to take a journey to Kolding in the year 2022”.<sup>12</sup> Each group explored Kolding’s future using one of four visions of Kolding as:

- The Design City of Volunteering
- The Design City of Knowledge
- The Design City of Culture
- The Design City of Enterprise

At the end of the session, participants were asked to reflect on their vision and provide a short presentation on how their vision would impact the future of Kolding. Following the presentations, participants were asked to ‘vote with their feet’ to select the vision that they found the most compelling. The “Design City of Volunteering” received the most support, while the “Design City of Culture” received the least.<sup>13 14</sup>

The fourth phase of Kolding’s journey involved a large-scale co-creation exercise with citizens. In November 2012, “all citizens of Kolding Municipality were invited to a huge community meeting, called Vision Forum, to give their input”.<sup>15</sup> Local media outlets and social media posts invited citizens to participate; 650 citizens participated in the Vision Forum, representing “the largest community meeting in Kolding’s recorded history”.<sup>16</sup> During the meeting, participants were divided into three groups to further explore the three future scenarios which received the most votes during the prior session. Each scenario was presented to participants who used SMS to ask questions and comment on the scenarios. The comments and questions were projected live to facilitate a collective discussion between all participants.

At the end of the day, participants were once again asked to select the future scenario that they would prefer to live in. The “Design City of

11 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”

12 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

13 The Municipality of Kolding had a long history with volunteering, which could explain the popularity of this vision at the early design states. The Municipality of Kolding had a long-standing position among the group of Danish municipalities that have provided the greatest financial support and backing of volunteerism. Moreover, in the context of reduced public resources, empowering the civil society has often been described as a possible solution and way of maintaining a high welfare level.

14 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

15 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

16 Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

Enterprise” and “Design City of Knowledge” were the most popular. By the end of this process, 900 people, or 1% of Kolding’s population had participated in creating a new vision for Kolding. Participants represented a broad cross-section of the population and was diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and education.<sup>17</sup> Following the Forum, politicians “voted on a vision that embraced aspects of all the future scenarios of Vision Forum: entrepreneurship, social innovation and education”.<sup>18</sup>

## From Vision to Reality

The fifth and final stage of Kolding’s reform process involves ‘implementing’ the desired change; this stage is currently ongoing. The implementation of the new vision is grounded in 10 initiatives that work to support the vision of Kolding as a hub of entrepreneurship, leader of social innovation, a strong education system and position Kolding as “an international lighthouse in the fields of design, entrepreneurship and social innovation”.<sup>19</sup>

The first step in implementing the vision was a political and administrative decision to market the vision through the slogan/payoff ‘We Design for Life’. In this first phase the design company Stagis A/S was charged with formulating a communication strategy. The next big step was launched in connection with the measure ‘Kolding Municipality Leads the Way’ (Kolding Kommune går forrest). All municipal managers were invited to participate in a design process aimed to develop a new management foundation based on the new vision. 250 managers participated in the year-long process, where they were introduced to and completed all the phases of the design process. Four basic management principles were identified and described. Together with six management competences these principles make up Kolding’s present management foundation. The four management principles are: 1) outlook, 2) productive diversity, 3) professionalism and 4) design-driven innovation.

Today, three years after the completion of the development process and the large ‘release party’ for all managers, the process has had a great impact. The majority of the managers in the municipality consider the management foundation a positive, guiding principle in their day-to-day work. All managers are now offered regular training in ‘design management’. The course is held for the second time this spring. Training in design management focusses on design practice and design management, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

<sup>18</sup> Guy Julier and Malene Leerberg, “Kolding - We Design For Life: Embedding a new design culture into urban regeneration”.

<sup>19</sup> Kolding Kommune, “Kolding - We design for life”, [https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om\\_kommunen/Design/viden\\_artikler/Summay\\_af\\_ESPA\\_ans%C3%B8gning\\_-\\_European\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Award\\_2015.pdf](https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om_kommunen/Design/viden_artikler/Summay_af_ESPA_ans%C3%B8gning_-_European_Public_Sector_Award_2015.pdf) (accessed April 9, 2017), p. 4.

# Creating Societal Outcomes with Citizens

Kolding's design vision continues to be implemented through a range of programs and collaborations. Citizens that helped to co-create Kolding's new vision now play a key role in co-producing outcomes and making the vision a reality.

The citizens are involved in the municipality's development on at least two levels: 1) All design-driven social innovation projects are based on the dogma that research into the context and involvement of the affected citizens is required in order to gain human-centred insight. In addition, the citizens function as vital partners at the various test stages. 2) Urban and city development projects are largely characterised by co-creation, where the affected and interested stakeholders take part in the creative idea generation process.

In 2013 the Senior and Social Services Department in Kolding Municipality developed a vision and strategy with the payoff 'Self-worth is more than welfare'. The underlying agenda of this vision is to give the citizens more self-determination and responsibility. Through a comprehensive design process, the Kolding Municipality created a new tool (called Min Plan) to explain a complex benefits system to citizens.<sup>20</sup> Since the Min Plan was launched, Kolding has reported a 24% reduction in sickness benefit expenses and a monthly payoff of more than DKK 2 million.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Kolding reports that "the number of citizen complaints has dropped by as much as 38%".<sup>22</sup>

Other efforts to engage citizens in realizing Kolding's vision include a new partnership between the Municipality, Kolding Design School and Business Kolding. The partnership has supported a number of citizen and design-focused programs including the 2017 DesignCamp to engage students in conversations around sustainable living and develop "real design solutions that can be scaled to meet the world's collective sustainability challenges", and a Sustainable Social Housing project that challenges PhD students to revamp Kolding's social housing spaces.<sup>23</sup>

So far, the City of Kolding has achieved a number of results. The design process has reduced the municipality's costs by 6.6 million Euros per year from 2013-15. Moreover, every year "more than 300 people in Kolding start their own businesses. The survival rate and job creation exceed the Danish national average and. After 5 years, the surviving entrepreneurs have created 450 jobs".<sup>24</sup>

After a period with no population growth from 2008-2010, the population is now increasing by approx. 3.5% each year. In 2013 Kolding had a population of around 90,000.

20 Kolding Kommune, "Min Plan" (Kolding: Kolding Kommune, 2017).

21 Kolding Kommune, "Min Plan".

22 Kolding Kommune, "Min Plan".

23 Kolding Municipality, "Collaboration and Partnership Agreement Between Design School Kolding and Kolding Municipality," (Kolding: Kolding Kommune, 2017).

24 Kolding Kommune, "Kolding - We design for life", [https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om\\_kommunen/Design/viden\\_artikler/Summay\\_af\\_ESPA\\_ans%C3%B8gning\\_-\\_European\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Award\\_2015.pdf](https://files.kolding.dk/images/dokumenter/Om_kommunen/Design/viden_artikler/Summay_af_ESPA_ans%C3%B8gning_-_European_Public_Sector_Award_2015.pdf) (accessed April 9, 2017), p. 1.

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