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# LEARNING BY DESIGN THINKING: A CASE STUDY OF INNOVATION IN MUNICIPAL MEAL-SERVICES

Master's thesis

**MSoc.Sc. in Management of Creative Business Processes**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates design thinking applied in a public sector context through a case-study of The Good Kitchen. The Good Kitchen is the name of a project aimed at creating a better meal-service to senior citizens in the city of Holstebro, Denmark, and illustrates how design thinking can drive change in public sector services.

A central assumption in this thesis is that we should not *only* pay attention to the tangible outputs from innovation driven by design thinking. To get beneath the surface of design thinking involves considering the more subtle changes from design. With this in mind, I chose to explore *changes* from design thinking, instead of retaining a focus on innovation and outputs, thus has the following research question guided my thesis: *What were the reasons for initiating The Good Kitchen, and in what ways did design thinking bring about change?*

Started in 2007, The Good Kitchen was one of the first cases to demonstrate the deliberate use of design thinking in public sector services. Owing this, I investigate why and by whom the project was initiated. A second point of focus is on the practical application of design thinking. I explain and dissect the process leading to the development of the current meal-service concept, as it is widely perceived to be a buzzword of our time. Thirdly, and reasoned in an ambition to understand also the hidden impacts from design thinking, I analyze the learning implication from design thinking, and more precisely the changes in the shared mental models of the organization.



## **Preface**

This master's thesis is written at Copenhagen Business School from 2011 to 2012 with the competent supervision from assistant professor Jesper Clement, Department of Marketing, and it is the final chapter in a master's degree (MSoc.Sc.) in Management of Creative Business Processes.

I graduated in 2008 from The University of Copenhagen with a bachelor's degree in Political/Social Science. Parallel to my master's studies, I have been employed at Mandag Morgen, a Copenhagen based think tank, where I have been working on innovation in public welfare services.

The topic of this thesis is therefore influenced by the insights and learnings I have collected through the last couple of year's work and studies.



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## Abbreviations

**EBST:** The Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority [Erhvervs- og Byggestyrelsen]

**H&B:** Hatch & Bloom

**TGK:** The Good Kitchen

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<sup>1</sup> To begin with the project was given the title 'Glad for mad'.

# 1. Introduction

The model underpinning the Danish welfare system is outdated and the current socioeconomic environment poses a magnitude of novel challenges to the society. Therefore radical changes in how we finance, organize and deliver public sector services will be needed, if we are to sustain a welfare society in the future (Mandag Morgen 2011).<sup>2</sup> The public sector must therefore embrace innovation and build the capacity to reinvent itself through *new ideas that work*.<sup>3</sup> Design-driven approaches to innovation are suggested as tools to meet these challenges and enable the development of new and better solutions (The Vision of the Design2020 Committee 2011: 19).

**The Good Kitchen meal-service program** for seniors in Holstebro Municipality (TGK) demonstrates how design thinking can drive innovation in a core welfare service like meal-service for seniors. TGK is thus not only the name of an existing meal-service program in Holstebro Municipality, but also the name of the project that it was developed from.

This thesis is a case study of TGK. Involving designers, users, kitchen workers, and management in co-creation, TGK illustrates a design-driven process that dramatically altered the kitchen and the service it provides its users with. I am motivated to write this thesis and investigate a particular case of design-driven public sector innovation for two principal reasons.

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<sup>2</sup> The 'modernisation of Denmark' is a theme in the Government Platform launched in November 2011 (The Danish Government 2011: 5).

<sup>3</sup> With reference to Young Foundations' definition of innovation (Mulgan 2007 :8).

## 1.1 Thesis motivation

**Firstly**, I am motivated by observing how the field of design is undergoing a fundamental change. It is an expanding and finding its way into other (non-creative) industries, such as the public sector (Rosted & Høgenhaven 2007; EBST 2009: 8; Bason 2010: 27). Considering that I am mastering in the creative industries and the processes in them, I find it interesting to see how the boundaries between sectors and industries are dissolving. TGK was developed with the help from Hatch & Bloom (H&B), a Danish idea and design agency, and thus resembles a practice where design skills are deployed in a context that we normally do not associate with the world of design.

**Secondly**, I am motivated to get beneath the surface of design thinking as it is widely criticized as being a buzzword of our time (e.g. Merholtz 2009).<sup>4</sup> However, design thinking is gaining a stronger foothold in different sectors and industries including the public sector (Bason 2010). One says that good news travel fast, but is this the case with design thinking or it just a smoke curtain? An expanding job-market for design professionals and the prospect of renewal in the public sector, in total makes design thinking a potential all-win framework. Still, an apparent need for demystifying design thinking exists if we are to believe some of the principal players in the Danish design industry.<sup>5</sup> Following this, I am curious to investigate what principles and methods design thinking-in-practice actually holds. Furthermore, if we are to understand what design thinking is really about, we must also start paying attention to what it *does* to the organization hosting the design-driven process? That is, among others, learning implications.

## 1.2 Research question, sub-questions and delimitation

The following research question guides my thesis:

***What were the reasons for initiating The Good Kitchen,  
and in what ways did design thinking bring about change?***

A principal argument in this thesis is that *change* takes place on two levels. When I refer to *change* - and not *innovation* - it is a conscious choice underlining that we should pay interest *also* to the less visible outcomes of a design-driven process. TGK was initiated to develop a new and improved

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Nussbaum argued July 4th, 2011 that "*Design Thinking Is A Failed Experiment*". Accessed on March 29th, 2012: <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663558/design-thinking-is-a-failed-experiment-so-whats-next>

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 5.

meal-service for the seniors in Holstebro. However, the kitchen as an organization underwent a learning process parallel to the creational process pursuing solid deliverables.

As a case study, this thesis generates in-depth knowledge about one particular case. In the research design and methods chapter, I elaborate on my choice of case, but in short, I have chosen to study TGK, because it is a *key case* exemplifying how design thinking can drive change in a public sector context. This perspective gives rise to a tripartite research design:

**Firstly**, I investigate the reasons behind initiating the project. From the assumption that innovation in public sector services is needed, it is interesting to learn about which initial motivations and catalysts that made the project come off.

**Secondly**, I study the practical application of design thinking. In line with the design industry's endeavor to demystify design thinking<sup>6</sup>, it is relevant to elucidate the process of TGK, because we hereby get a peek inside the (black) box of design thinking.

**Thirdly**, it is relevant to investigate the learning implications from design thinking from an organizational perspective. Specifically, I study how design thinking created changes in the shared mental models of the municipal kitchen. The learning perspective is added to the equation in order to shed light on some of the subtler and less visible effects from design thinking. My quest is to understand - as holistically as possible - what design thinking *does* to an organization.

The tripartite research design is translated into the following three sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1:**

"Why was The Good Kitchen initiated and what catalyzed the process?"

**Sub-question 2:**

"In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?"

**Sub-question 3:**

"In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of The Good Kitchen?"

The three sub-questions constitute the analytical focus in this thesis. I combine theory from three diverse fields of research in a common analytical framework that I use to address and answer the three sub-questions.

This thesis is not concerned with the economical aspects of the case. A common feature of innovation in public sector services is that projects are initiated with the economical departure point that they should be cost-neutral or *zero solutions*. This was also the case with TGK.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 3, the introduction.

However, design-driven innovation in public sector organizations is mainly exemplified in projects that have been supported financially through different governmental programs aimed at building best practices. In chapter eight on suggestions for further research, I address the crux of the matter and argue that the design industry must find a way to break free from the governmental programs, if design thinking is going to be a widely adopted framework to drive change in public sector services.

### 1.3 Case presentation: The Good Kitchen

TGK was a service-design project aimed at developing an enhanced and user-oriented meal-service for seniors in Holstebro Municipality. The project was conducted as a partnership between the municipality and Hatch & Bloom, a Danish idea- and design agency (H&B 2012a). TGK is also the name of the kitchen that today supplies Holstebro's seniors, with home-delivered meals.

The project was started in 2007 as a demonstration project funded by the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (EBST) due to a governmental design strategy aimed at bringing Danish design back into the world elite of design nations (Broksø 2008; The Danish Government 2007).

In chapter 5, I explain the project in detail. However, a new visual identity, a new menu catalogue and guest dinners, 'praise-and complaint'-post cards, new uniforms, food styling and better meal quality as well as more *cooking-from-the-scratch* are some of the direct results from the project. Outcomes of socio-economical interest are: that 'nibbling' seniors have increased appetite, that customer satisfaction has gone up, and that the meal-service has experienced an increase in the numbers of customers.

The project has won several prices.<sup>8</sup> In order to access the outcomes from the project, a report was made to evaluate the process according to three parameters (Teknologisk Institut 2009: 39):

- *Meal-service quality* was enhanced through better and more appetizing meals, a new menu concept and improved reputation.
- *Organizational efficiency* was also considered a success. Productivity has risen as more meals are produced per employee.
- *User satisfaction* had in 2009, when the report was completed, declined a little. However, in newer accounts of the project, it is stated that user satisfaction has increased and that the number of subscribers has gone up from 525 to 600 (EBST 2010: 35).

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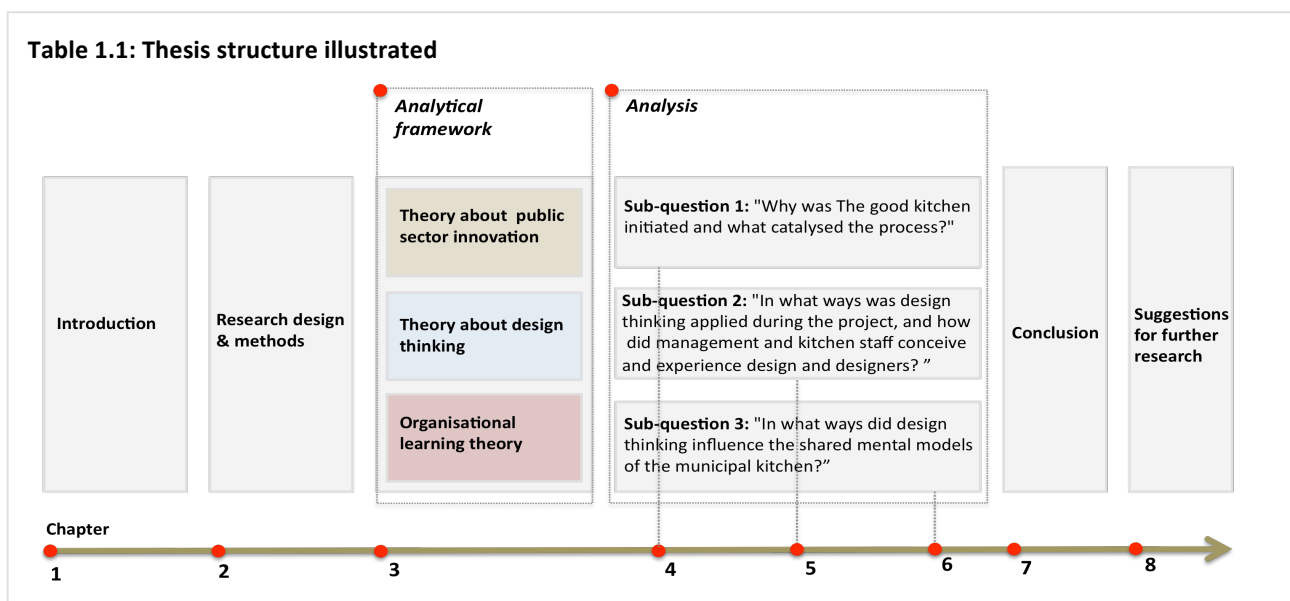
<sup>7</sup> Appendix 5, I. 234-237.

<sup>8</sup> The Danish Design Award 2008/2009, in the category "Service Design", awarded by The Danish Design Centre; "The Small Innovation Award", 2009, awarded by Local Government Denmark [in Danish: KL];

## 1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. The next chapter explains the research strategy and specific methods used. The third chapter explains the theoretical foundation of this thesis. Chapter four, five and six comprise the analysis, each addressing one of the three sub-questions. The seventh chapter concludes the thesis and answers my principal research-question. The eighth chapter suggests areas for further research and specifically discussed challenges in regards to the dissemination of design thinking.

The thesis structure is illustrated in table 1.1:





## 2. Research strategy & methods

In this chapter I explain the principal considerations related to research design and methods with the purpose to ensure transparency into the research process. I assume that the reader is familiar with the basics of a case study, and thus only elaborate on my chosen research strategy according to a number of classificatory layers (Thomas 2011).

Since this case study is structured according to three sub-questions, I use both inductive and deductive approaches. I account for how I use the different modes of reasoning in the **first part** of this section. In the **second part**, I classify my case study and hereby discuss pro's and con's related to the chosen research strategy. **Thirdly**, I describe specific methods used for data-collection, and also describe how data has been processed. **Fourthly**, I discuss criteria of validity and reliability.

### 2.1 Sub-questions and modes of reasoning

Modes of reasoning relate to how we deploy theory and empirical data in order to generate knowledge (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 21). Deduction denominates one mode of reasoning, where knowledge is build from theory testing. Induction, on the other hand, is explorative and covers research where theory is generated from (empirical) data. However distinct these

processes may seem, I combine them dialectically throughout my study, and none of the sub-questions are answered by purely inductive or deductive means. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 21-23). In the following section, I explain how I approach each sub-question.<sup>9</sup>

In the first sub-question I *explore* the decision to initiate TGK, guided by two principal arguments of why public

**Sub-question 1:**

"Why was The Good Kitchen initiated and what catalyzed the process?"

sector innovation is needed that I have subtracted from literature on public sector innovation. Also I explore catalysts of innovation guided by two dichotomies *also* found in literature on public sector innovation. The approach resembles an *inductive approach*, where theory is used to *label* my interpretations of findings – something that illustrate that my research, despite being explorative, still to some extent is theory-driven.

In the second sub-question I *describe* the particular *ways* in which design thinking was deployed through the

**Sub-question 2:**

"In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?"

project. Hereby, I use theory on design thinking and analyze according to the dichotomy of *mindset vs. methods*.<sup>10</sup> In the second part of this question I use an *inductive* approach in order to assign the interviewees principal status and allow them to tell their story of how they perceived the collaboration. This last part is purely inductive, and thus not driven by theory.

In the third and last sub-question I investigate the 'hidden' implications from design thinking. The link between

**Sub-question 3:**

"In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of The Good Kitchen?"

innovation, design, and learning is based on literature providing me with the analytical concepts needed.<sup>11</sup> In particular, I use the concept of *shared mental modes* to understand how design thinking influences organizational learning.

<sup>9</sup> In chapter 6, I describe the theoretical basis of 'design thinking'. In here, I refer to a third mode of reasoning: Abduction. I find it important to stress, that I do not infer from abductive reasoning in this thesis. We must distinguish the epistemology of Design Thinking, from the epistemology, that I base this thesis on.

<sup>10</sup> See section 3.2 for details on mindset and methods.

<sup>11</sup> Besides the two models that I combine (Beckmann & Barry 2007; Kim 1993), the particular concept of 'shared mental models' (also Kim 1993) are the main structuring 'devices' in the last part of my analysis.

## 2.2 Case design: Classifying the case study of The Good Kitchen

I conduct a *case study*<sup>12</sup> of a service-design project executed in Holstebro Municipality (DK) from 2007-2008. The project purpose was to change the municipal meal-service "*from industrial catering service to [a] restaurant*"<sup>13</sup> and develop an updated food program for Holstebro's seniors.

The purpose of this study is to understand the dynamics inherent in this one particular case. Case study research is furthermore a well-suited strategy for developing theory, especially in relation to complex or novel phenomena (George & Bennett 2005: 21). I consider TGK to be both complex and novel.

### 2.2.1 Object and subject of a case study

When studying a case we need to establish a frame, since "*if you want to talk about a "case", you also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context*" (Thomas 2011: 513). In other words, we study a case, not for what it is in itself, but because it is a *case of something* (Thomas 2011: 512). This leads me to differentiate between *object* and *subject* of study.

TGK is my *subject* of inquiry. I study the *complexity* and *uniqueness* of this particular project.<sup>14</sup> My *object* of study is *design-driven public-sector innovation*. That is innovation taking place in the public sector consciously driven by design thinking. I perceive this phenomenon as a potential vehicle to initiate change in a public sector context.<sup>15</sup>

In the beginning of my research, I perceived TGK to be an example of how design thinking can drive change in a public sector context. Later, as my research progressed, I decided to look at the subtle changes from design thinking, the learning implications. This illustrates the dynamic relation between object and subject (Thomas 2011: 515). By adding a learning-perspective to my study, *the object* was no longer only related to the creation of new (visible) solutions (innovation-perspective), but also describing the more subtle and intangible changes found in the shared mental models of the municipal kitchen (learning-perspective).

### 2.2.2 The Good Kitchen as a *key case*

TGK reflects a *key case* of how design thinking can drive change in a public-sector organization. We study a key case because it hold the capacity to exemplify the object of study, not because it

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<sup>12</sup> Simons (2009) define a case study as: "(...) an *in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a "real life" context.*" (Simons 2009: 21).

<sup>13</sup> According to Hatch & Bloom's website describing the project: <http://www.hatchandbloom.com/work/service-design?show=asy> (Webpage was accessed on March 20th 2012).

<sup>14</sup> With reference to Simons' definition of a case study (Simons 2009: 21).

<sup>15</sup> Both change as 'the creation of novel and better solutions' but also as 'the building of new, shared understandings - form an organisational learning perspective'.

provides us with generalizeable insights. Studying a key case means that we generate *exemplary knowledge* as opposed to *generalizable knowledge* (Thomas 2011: 514).<sup>16</sup>

TGK was one of the first projects of its kind, and neither kitchen staff nor leaders in Holstebro Municipality had been exposed to the principles of design thinking prior to the project, which made it interesting to investigate, how organization members responded to the exposure of design thinking.

## 2.3 Data selection and processing

This section accounts for how I selected, collected, and processed the data that forms the empirical basis of my research.

### 2.3.1 Empirical information from interviewing

In total I conducted eight interviews in order to generate the needed empirical data to answer the three sub-questions. In the initial research phase, I conducted two background interviews. Later I conducted six<sup>17</sup> interviews with various persons involved in TGK. The interviewees are listed in appendix 1.

#### ***Background interviews***

Firstly, I met with KKR, a project manager from the Danish Design Centre working with design and welfare innovation. I conducted this interview in the initial phase of my research, and thus only had not narrowed down my problem area. The interview was unstructured, and as a consequence hereof, resembled a conversation (Bryman 2004: 320). I used this interview to provide me with a catalogue of ideas as well as insights into discipline of design-driven public-sector innovation. In this interview, I was presented to the design industry's point of views.

Secondly, I interviewed PSA, who is working in the administrative department responsible for TGK in Holstebro Municipality. This interview was conducted as a telephone interview, but similar to the first background interview, this was also conducted as an unstructured interview. In the time between first and second background interview, I had formulated a research question draft. I used this interview to test the notions reflected in the draft, but also to get an idea about, how a welfare leader, who has been involved in a design-driven innovation project, sees potentials

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<sup>16</sup> Hereby, I reject Yin's (2003) idea about a case being representative or a typical representation of a given phenomenon: "*In short, the notion of typicality may give an unwarranted impression to any reader that the significance of the analysis rests in the representativeness of the subject. It does not.*" (Thomas 2011: 514).

<sup>17</sup> I interviewed PSA twice. See appendix 1 for details.

and barriers from this discipline.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

Interviews were conducted with five persons involved in TKG. I sampled the interviewees on the basis of their relevance to the research questions. I wanted representatives from both management level in the municipality's administration as well as representatives working in the kitchen. In addition to this, I wanted accounts of the project from the design agency's point of view.

All interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews offer the interviewee the chance to express herself/himself individually, and at the same time structure the conversation around a number of topics (Bryman 2004: 320-324). This involves a very flexible interview-situation, where the sequence of questions was amended during the interview.

I prepared a question-guide prior to each interview. Bryman (2004) suggests that a question guide is developed "from the perspective of your interviewee" (Bryman 2004: 324). Reasoned in this point, the guides were adjusted to the organizational position of each interviewee. All six interviews were recorded and transcribed, and question-guides are enclosed in appendix 9a-e.

### **2.3.2 Data processing: Coding and mode of reasoning**

Coding refers to the process of making sense of qualitative data - in my case - the transcribed interviews (Bryman 2004: 399). Through the coding process, data is broken down into sub-components and attributed meanings.

First step of the coding process was to read through all transcriptions and sort the text according to the topics of each sub-question. Next step involved assigning categories to the data. The coding process differed according to the different modes of reasoning that I deploy in answering the three sub-questions<sup>18</sup>:

**Sub-question 1:** The initial coding phase was done *loosely* by the use of themes that related to either *reason for initiating the project* as well as assertions about *how the process was catalyzed*.

**Sub-question 2:** Firstly, I coded according to the dichotomy of *mindset vs. methods*. In second part of the question (addressing preconceptions and experiences), I deployed an inductive mode of

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<sup>18</sup> I explained the different modes of reasoning in section 2.1.

reasoning, meaning that coding was done differently: First, I used both open-coding (to identify preconceptions), followed by selective coding, where the initial categories were re-grouped into new categories<sup>19</sup> (Bryman 2004: 401-403).

**Sub-question 3:** I used the notion of 'shared understanding' (Kim 1993) to structure my investigation of learning implications from the project., and this was also structuring my coding.

The code-trees, belonging to each of the three sub-questions, were developed during the coding process. All three code-trees are enclosed in appendix 2.

## 2.3 Discussing matters of validity and reliability

In order to ensure validity, I involved the interviewees in my research process by having them approve on all the citations that I use directly as excerpts in the text.<sup>20</sup> I did this in order to avoid potential misunderstandings arising from my interpretation of the interviews. However, the interviewees did not see the entire analysis. Also, no changes were made in the citations.

All interviews were conducted in Danish, but excerpts that I use directly in the text are translated into English. Since all translation involves some kind of interpretation, this is potentially also compromising the validity.

My decision to interview people from different organizational positions in Holstebro Municipality was also grounded in considerations about validity. By including different accounts of the process, I sought to ensure that the empirical data, on which I grounded the analysis, covered as many perspectives and experiences as possible.

Reliability refers to the idea that research should be replicable (Bryman 2004: 273). Because social research is context-dependent, this criterion can be hard to meet. Another challenge of reliability in qualitative research is that we investigate a phenomenon in constant change - the world. From this we see, why it may seem difficult to ensure a high degree of reliability in qualitative research.

Being explicit about approach and methods deployed throughout my research may not strengthen the reliability, but it enhances the level of transparency.

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<sup>19</sup> Categories corresponds to 'Assertion 1-4' in section 5.2.2.

<sup>20</sup> All interviews were conducted in Danish, why I later translated all the excerpts used directly in the text.

# 3. Analytical framework

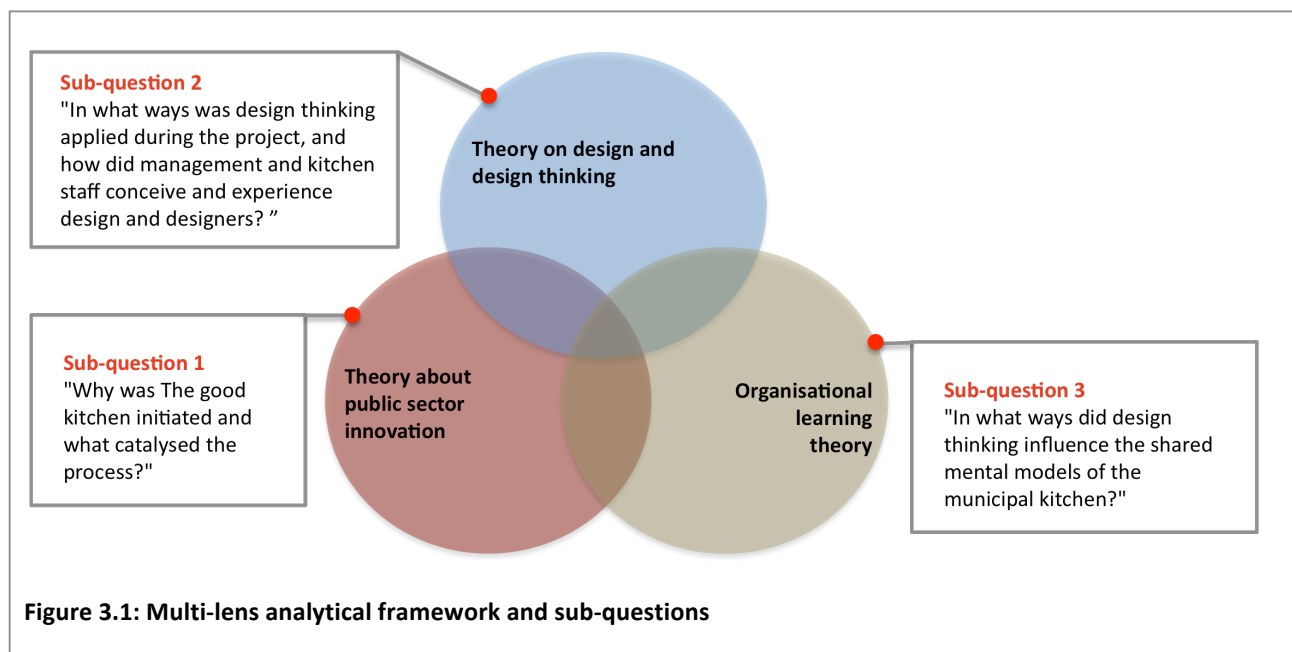
This chapter explains the theories that I deploy in my case study of TKG. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part explains the reasons for building an analytical framework that combines theory from different research fields. The following three parts separately account for the three fields of research that I later use in the theory sections.

Theories are lenses, which applied to a given social phenomenon, will explain or highlight certain aspects of that phenomenon; they are lenses that we see the world through (Bryman 2004: 17). Furthermore, I perceive theory as consisting of *preliminary and changing* assumptions that direct my research (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 41). Applied is theory not rigid or stable, but redefined throughout a research process. This flexible view on theory allows me to combine different theories in a common framework, and I redefine theory, when I apply it to new contexts and by supplementing one theory with concepts from other theories.

Two points should be made about my decision to combine theory in a common analytical framework. **First of all**, the theories do not offer *competing* explanations of my object of research, since they do not describe the *exact* same phenomenon. Instead, they address different aspects of design-driven public sector innovation and thus offer *complimentary* explanations.

The **second point** is that none of the theories can stand alone, since one single theory/theoretical field does not offer a comprehensive account of all the aspects that I address in my three sub-questions. I use a multiple lens framework, since *"each theory makes a unique and valuable contribution to understanding the phenomenon under explanation. (...) Because no one theory offers all the answers, it makes sense to consider, what each has to offer."* (Tracey & Morrow 2006: 11).

Figure 3.1 illustrates what lenses I apply to each of the three sub-questions.



### 3.1 Theory part one: Innovation in the public sector

This section constitutes the first building block of the analytical framework. Since TGK reflects an example of how design thinking can drive change in public sector services, I use theory on public-sector innovation in first part of the analysis (chapter 4) to address the first sub-question: *"Why was TGK initiated and what catalyzed the process?"* Besides presenting the reader to some general reflections about public-sector innovation, this section explains the theory that I use in chapter 4, when I analyze the *arguments* for innovation as well as the *catalysts* of innovation in relation to TGK.

### 3.1.1 Presenting public-sector innovation

Definitions on innovation are numerous (Bason 2010: 33).<sup>21</sup> Innovation, as a concept, originates in business and management literature. Consequently, definitions of innovation are often connected to private sector contexts. However, innovation has been translated into a definition matching the particularities of the public sector.<sup>22</sup> Bason (2010) defines public-sector innovation as: "*the process of creating new ideas and turning them into value for society*" (Bason 2010: 34).

First of all, the definition emphasizes how innovation is a process moving from idea to implementation and hereby differs from *invention* (Hartley 2005: 27).<sup>23</sup> Secondly, and particular for the public sector, it stresses how value is created *for society* - not shareholders or customers.

The prevailing myth that the public sector suffers from a lack of innovation is a fallacy (Albury 2005: 52; Bommert 2010: 15). Numerous examples of innovations show that the public sector does innovate<sup>24</sup>, but innovations are rarely fostering a *radical change* (Bason 2010; Albury 2005; Digmann et. al 2008).

When defining the degree of change brought about by innovation, a known dichotomy is incremental vs. radical innovation. Incremental innovations are "*minor changes and adaptations to existing services or processes*" (Albury 2005: 52). They are often local initiatives, but manifold. In contrast, radical innovations constitute fundamental change.<sup>25</sup> They are less frequent, but demonstrate entirely new solutions.<sup>26</sup> (Mulgan & Albury 2003: 3) The current landscape of public-sector innovation is therefore best described as 'random incrementalism' with reference to the many incremental innovations (Bason 2010: 19). Bommert (2010) calls this a 'deficiency', meaning that the public sector is unable to create the "*necessary quality and quantity of innovations in order to meet the emergent and persistent social, economic and environmental challenges*" (Bommert 2010: 20). Radical innovation is needed to match radical societal challenges (Bommert 2009). Design thinking is suggested as one potential answer to this need for fundamental change (Bason 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> Another definition is Young Foundation defining public-sector innovation simply as *new ideas that work* (Mulgan et. al. 2007:8).

<sup>22</sup> Mulgan & Albury 2003:3; Digmann et. al 2008: 24.

<sup>23</sup> This is a general assumption of innovation and therefore not particular for innovation in the public sector.

<sup>24</sup> Examples from Denmark can be found at: [www.velfærdensinnovatører.dk](http://www.velfærdensinnovatører.dk); [www.ddc.dk/velfærdsinnovation](http://www.ddc.dk/velfærdsinnovation)

<sup>25</sup> Transformative or systemic innovations demonstrate changes resulting from new technologies or organisational forms (Albury 2005: 52; Mulgan & Albury 2003: 3). Examples are biotechnology and cell phone technology.

<sup>26</sup> Examples are 'Fair trade', Grameen (micro-credit bank), and Linux software (Mulgan et. al. 2007: 47).

### 3.1.2 Why innovation in public sector services is needed

In literature on public-sector innovation, I have come across different arguments of why innovation in public sector services is needed<sup>27</sup>, however two main arguments are found to be prevalent: 1) wicked societal problems/challenges and 2) changes in citizens' demands.

*Wicked societal problems* relate to persistent and emerging large-scale social, economic and environmental problems, e.g. demographic change, unemployment and climate changes (Bommert 2010: 19). Such problems are located at the macro-level of society. In addition, the financial crisis<sup>28</sup> has brought about an element of urgency exacerbating the situation further, and radical innovation is proposed the key component in coping with such radical challenges (Bommert 2010: 15; Harris & Albury 2009).

*Changes in citizens' demand and expectations* form the second argument of a need for innovation in public sector services. In a survey<sup>29</sup> from 2010, investigating the development in citizen's expectations as perceived by leaders in the public sector, 86 pct. answered that they experienced an increasingly larger cleavage between the citizenry's expectations and the services offered (Mandag Morgen 2010b: 25). This second argument of a *need for innovation*, pivots around citizen behavior. It is, according to Albury, a tendency that cannot be dealt with by improving efficiency in the public sector, since it reflects that citizens continuously expect more and more in return for their tax money (Albury 2005: 51). Another side of this argument relates to the increasing demand for personalized services. A tendency we also find in the private market. This change in demand is qualitative in nature, since *one size does not fit all anymore*. In total, this calls for a fundamental change in public sector services (Albury 2005: 51; Albury & Mulgan 2003).

By investigating the different ways innovation is argued for, I gain insight into the discourse of the discussions about the future of welfare society. Additionally, by questioning *the need for innovation*, we move away from innovation as a buzzword and approach the substance of *why* innovation has become a hot topic for governments and in public sector services. In relation to my case study of TKG, I am curious to learn, whether these arguments for innovation played a role in the decision to initiate the project. In the analysis (chapter 4) I therefore investigate, whether the decision was influenced by any of the two identified arguments.

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<sup>27</sup> In business literature, innovation is when a new products/service/way of organising is created, which provides a company with competitive advantage resulting in wealth creation (Schumpeter).

<sup>28</sup> However, surveys investigating examples of public-sector innovations indicate that 70% of the innovations were not initiated as response to crisis (Mulgan & Albury 2003: 7). Furthermore, these studies show that when innovation was driven by crisis, problems were grounded in organisational settings.

<sup>29</sup> N=1058 (Mandag Morgen 2010b: 25)

### 3.1.3 Catalysts of innovation in public sector services

Literature on innovation is packed with different dichotomies and labels that we can use to define a given innovation.<sup>30</sup> However, since I am occupied with understanding the decision to initiate TGK, I focus on the *catalysts* behind the project. The notion of catalysts of innovation is closely connected to how we traditionally perceive a 'catalyst' - *a person or a thing that causes a change*<sup>31</sup>. In other words, something or someone that fuels a process, movement, etc. By investigations catalysts of innovation, we ask where the innovation came from. I explain the notion of catalyst via two dimensions: 1) internal vs. external and 2) top-down vs. bottom-up.

*Internal vs. external catalysts* refers to the notion that innovation can be catalyzed from the outside of an organization. In innovation-literature a well-know dichotomy is that between closed and open innovation.<sup>32</sup> However, since closed innovation covers processes isolated to closed 'laboratories', such label is not very useful when studying the public services (Digmann et. al. 2008: 37). The point is that open innovation is too broad a category, since most innovation in public services in some way can be characterized as open. In contrast, innovation can be catalyzed by internal agents, and still be labeled as open innovation. Also inspirators, consultants, or newly hired personnel can impose innovation externally. (Digmann et. al. 2008: 50-52)

Bason (2010) refers to a common situation in public sector services, where innovations are driven by (willful) isolated individuals with little or no formal knowledge about innovation processes. Such 'random innovations' (Bason 2010) rarely involve external agents (Bason 2010: 15), but sometimes do.<sup>33</sup> Often, innovations in public-sector organizations are initiated internally. A report by the Danish Ministry of Finance from 2005 shows that ideas originate from inside the organizations (Danish Ministry of Finance 2005). In other words, leaders or front-line staffs are often the ones catalyzing innovation.

*Top-down vs. bottom-up:* A (vertical) dichotomy exists between top-down innovations, where change is catalyzed from government level (policies, reforms etc.) or from top management, and bottom-up innovations, where innovation is driven by e.g. front-line staff (Mulgan & Albury 2003: 4).<sup>34</sup> Public-sector innovation is traditionally perceived as originating from the top, but surveys show that ideas emerge from all levels of public-sector organizations (Borins 2001).

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<sup>30</sup> See appendix 13 for an overview over different dichotomies

<sup>31</sup> The Free Dichotomary: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/catalyst>

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Chesbrough's (2003) model for open innovation and Hippel's (2005) book about lead-user innovation and the democratization of innovation.

<sup>33</sup> One example is 'Green Partnerships' [Grønne partnerskaber] (Mandag Morgen 2012: 66).

<sup>34</sup> Behn 1995.

## 3.2 Theory part two: Design thinking

Theory on design thinking forms the second building block of the analytical framework. I use design research literature as well as literature specifically about design thinking, when I address the second sub-question: "*In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?*"

Besides offering the reader a brief introduction to design thinking, this section explains the two layers of design thinking. In relation to TGK, I am occupied with the practical application of design thinking as well as potential preconceptions towards design and designers<sup>35</sup>. Present section therefore lays the theoretical foundation that I deploy in chapter 5, which comprises second part of the analysis.

### 3.2.1 Presenting design thinking

I distinguish between the terms *design* and *design thinking*. *Design* refers to the traditional design disciplines focused at designing a product (tangible or intangible).<sup>36</sup> In contrast, emerging design disciplines are centered, not on shaping a product, but *on designing for a purpose*. (Sanders 2006: 30; Sanders & Stappers 2008: 11). Design thinking thus reflects a change in how design is perceived and deployed.

Design thinking supplements management and organizational theory (Kimbell 2009a: 5), and is proposed a key component enabling innovation (Lockwood 2010: xvi) - also in the public sector (Bason 2010: 125). Design thinking are thus seen as a creative alternative to the traditional spreadsheet way of thinking (Merholtz 2009). Lockwood (2010) offers a comprehensive definition of design thinking, which encompasses many of the decisive features of design thinking, that I identify later in this chapter. See table 3.1.

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<sup>35</sup> The last part of the second sub-question: "*...and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?*", is investigated from a purely inductive mode of reasoning, and thus is not supported by theory.

<sup>36</sup> Examples are architecture, product design, industrial design, information design, graphic design etc.

**Table 3.1: Defining design thinking**

"Design thinking is essentially a human-centred process that emphasizes observation, collaboration, fast learning, visualization of ideas, rapid concept prototyping, and concurrent business analysis, which ultimately influences innovation and business strategy. The objective is to involve consumers, designers, and businesspeople in an integrative process, which can be applied to product, service, or even business design. It is a tool to imagine future states and to bring products, services, or even business design to market. The term design thinking is generally referred to as applying a designer's sensibility and methods to problem solving, no matter what the problem is. It is not a substitute for professional design or the art and craft of designing, but rather a methodology for innovation and enablement."

Lockwood (2010: xi)

Inspired by Brown<sup>37</sup> (2008), Lockwood (2010) distinguishes between *a designer's sensibility and methods*. Beckman & Barry (2007a) discern between *design theories* and *design methods* (Beckman & Barry 2007a: 26). Regardless of different labels, a joint perception of a dual level (of abstraction) exists within design thinking, whereby design practices are blended with cognition (Bason 2010: 139).

Design *thinking* is on one side mental and intangible. Its intellectual basis is subtracted from traditional design disciplines, the *design attitude* (Kimbell 2009a). However, design thinking also involves *doing*. The practice-aspect of design thinking covers methods of visualization and modeling, but also methods that belong to ethnography and other social science disciplines (Kimbell 2009a: 4; Julier 2008: 102). In the following, I explain design thinking by the dichotomy differentiating mindset from methodology.

### 3.2.2 The mindset of design thinking

A design thinker's mindset differs from that of traditional management and business.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, design thinking is not necessarily involving aesthetics and functionality; values that we usually relate to traditional design. Design thinking therefore takes a position in between business and design (Martin 2009).

I explain the mindset of design thinking according to four traits identified in various literature on design thinking in table 3.2:

<sup>37</sup> Brown 2008: 2.

<sup>38</sup> I acknowledge that it is oversimplifying to refer to a unitary business mindset.

**Table 3.2: Design thinking as mindset**

- **Validity-orientation:** Design thinking favors in-depth knowledge over replicable knowledge.
- **Modes of reasoning:** Abduction supplements deduction and induction.
- **Problem-framing and satisfactory solutions:** Design thinking does not black-box problems, but work towards satisfactory solutions instead of optimal solutions.
- **Human-centeredness:** Design thinking operates with a wide version of stakeholder-involvement and emphasizes diversity and divergent thinkers.

**Validity-orientation:** Designers are occupied with achieving in-depth knowledge about their object of study, in contrast to generating knowledge that can be reproduced consistently (Leavy 2010: 9). The design thinker therefore often abandons quantitative research in favor of qualitative methods offering insights about users and contexts (Martin 2010; Leavy 2010). However, since design thinking takes up a position in-between business and design, design thinking does not reject the value of reliability that we usually would connect to the spread-sheet world of business - and in present context: the public sector. (Leavy 2010: 9; Leavy 2011: 24).

**A third mode of reasoning:** Deduction and induction are traditional logics generating knowledge analytically. However, design thinking add a third mode of reasoning to the equation; that is abduction and thus combines all three modes (Martin 2010; Leavy 2010). Abduction bridges the gap between analysis (splitting) and synthesis (putting together) (Bason 2010: 137).

Abduction is the logic of what-might-be, and enables us to gain knowledge about the future.<sup>39</sup> (Cross 2006: 37; Leavy 2010: 9). Referring to Peirce, the originator of the term, Martin (2010) states that to develop truly new thoughts, concepts, or ideas, we cannot solely rely on data from the past (Martin 2010: 40; Leavy 2010: 9).

Abduction is an abstract theory on how we can draw conclusions that are not based on past knowledge. However, what is being proposed in literature on design thinking is a 'lighter' version of abduction, referring to the notion of exploring new solutions *unrestricted*.

<sup>39</sup> In his book "The Sciences of the Artificial", Simon (1969) describes the opposing nature of natural sciences and the sciences of the artificial (design) as following: "The natural sciences are concerned with how things are... Design, on the other hand, is concerned with how things ought to be."

**Problem-framing and satisfactory solutions:** The adherence to validity relates to the designerly way of working. Design thinkers do not black-box problems. "*In a designer's world, objects and technologies are necessarily contingent; they don't have to be that way*" (Kimbell 2009a: 3). Design thinking is not about finding the optimal solution to a given problem. We may even say, that in a design thinker's world, problems are never given, but only framed by different limiting factors. From a design thinking perspective, bounded rationality is a premise (Hatchuel 2001). Not knowing everything means that the quest of the design thinker is to search for a *satisfactory* solution (Cross 2006: 103).

**Human-centeredness:** Design thinking is fundamentally a human-centered approach, bringing together designers, executives, front-line staff, users etc. in a collective creation process.<sup>40</sup> The challenge of design thinking is to have people "*articulate the latent needs they may not now they have*" (Brown 2009: 40) Roles are mixed, and the professional designer is facilitator (Sanders & Stappers 2008: 13). Thus design thinking is not privileging the work of the designer (Kimbell 2009a: 1). Design thinkers can be found outside the design studios, since "*(...) design has become something too important to be left to designers*" (Brown 2009: 8).

### 3.2.3 Design thinking as an applied methodology

This section explains the toolbox of a design thinker. That is, the specific methods that are found in processes structured according to design thinking principles. Methods are the *visible signs* or specific activities, which participants in a design thinking process go through. Innovation is commonly visualized in stage-gate models<sup>41</sup>, and models of design-driven innovation often adhere to same models. An overview on the different models is enclosed in appendix 10, illustrating how different accounts of design thinking actually are very similar.<sup>42</sup>

However, regardless of what shape we like a process to take (linear or non-linear<sup>43</sup>), it is the building blocks of those exact processes that constitute a design thinker's toolbox. Those are the methods of design thinking.

After reviewing literature on design thinking, I have found that Bason (2010) offers a comprehensive account of a design thinking toolbox, developed to fit a public sector context.<sup>44</sup>

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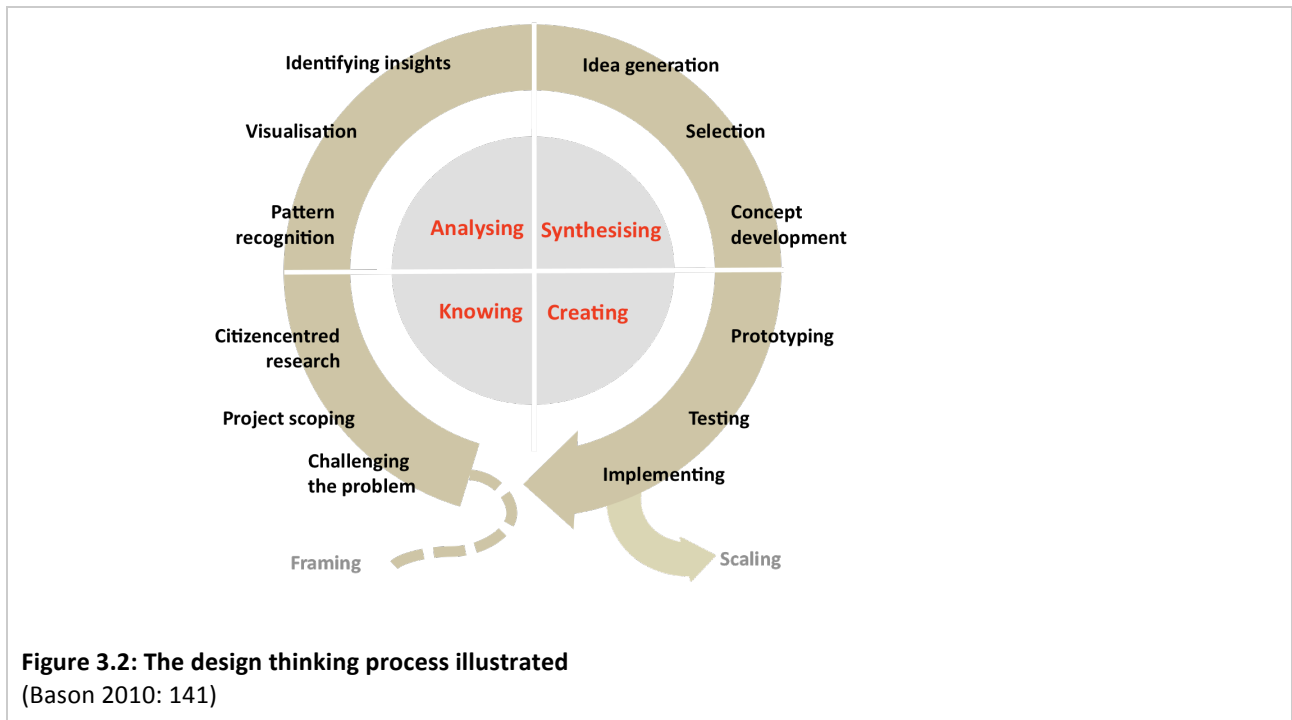
<sup>40</sup> Bason (2010) denominates the design thinking as a process of "co-creation" (Bason 2010).

<sup>41</sup> The Danish Design Centre's "DIN-model" [Design-driven Innovation Model] is one example of a stage-gate model.

<sup>42</sup> However, Verganti's version of design-driven innovation differs from other accounts in that it is build around the discursive notion of "design of meaning" (Verganti 2009)

<sup>43</sup> Various design thinking models share the assumption that the process and its' sub-elements are iterative (Bason 2010: 175; Stickdorn et. al. 2010: 124).

(Figure 3.2) In the following text, I explain a (generic) innovation process of design thinking, divided into four parts: *Knowing, analyzing, synthesizing, and creating*, as illustrated by figure 3.2. Next, I account for the four main phases of the process. *Sub-phases and concrete methods* suggested are listed in table 3.3.



**Phase one: Methods for knowing:** Knowing is the first phase in the design thinking process, and relates to the activities aimed at achieving insight into the subject matter. Three sub-processes are found in this initial phase (Bason 176-179):

- **Challenging the problem.** How a problem should be approached is contingent. However, suggested factors to identify, are champions of the project, resources and motivations for change, sources of potential resistance and barriers.
- **Project scoping** is about the actual design of the design thinking process. Involves project planning (time frame), key activities, setting the project team and budgeting. Another activity is to identify stakeholders and 'wild cards'<sup>45</sup>.
- **Citizen-centered research** allows us to see the world from the eyes of citizens, but only possible through interaction. Also a team should map existing knowledge, as well as investigate potential blind spots.

<sup>44</sup> Stickdorn et. al. writes about 'service-design', which I understand as design thinking applied to the design of services.

<sup>45</sup> People who can supply the project team with new angles etc.

**Phase two: Methods for analyzing:** The analysis phase covers three sub-processes aimed at *translating* data into structured knowledge (Bason 2010: 180-187):

- **Pattern recognition** is the initial step in sorting data. Data (made tangible through print-out of interviews, pictures etc.) is structured (e.g. on whiteboard) according to themes, steps in a service process, segments etc. The process is purely inductive process.
- **Visualization** is done in order to present decision-makers and other stakeholders to the interim findings.
- **Identifying insights** is about confronting stakeholders, management, front-line staffs with the interim (structured and visualized) findings. This sub-process is to a large degree about interpretation, because stakeholders are involved and asked to point out the 'strategic meat' of the findings.

**Phase three: Methods for synthesizing:** Synthesizing is the phase where the first steps of creation is taken (Bason 2010: 187-196). Synthesizing is about putting together and about starting to make sense out of the preliminary findings. Brown (2009) refers to the "*convergent phase of making choices*" (Brown 2009: 82):

- **Idea-generation** is the part of the process most likely to be associated with innovation, and can be conducted in numerous ways.
- **Selection** refers to the process of screening ideas and selecting the few that we want to pursue. Criteria for evaluating ideas naturally are depending on the specific context, project, etc.
- **Concept-development** refers to the sub-process of moving from ideas, one-liners or post-its to more comprehensive accounts of potential solutions. Concepts often are developed to encompass several solutions, and often decided internally (in the organization), but manifested in a written description encompassing factors such as 'objective'; 'content' and 'value proposition/benefit' that can be used externally.

**Phase four: Methods for creating:** In a design thinking process considerable emphasis is put on the phase between concept development and implementation of a new solution. Creating thus refers to the phase, where new solutions are refined and tested, before they are implemented (Bason 2010: 195-199):

- **Prototyping** is (in a public sector context) a largely practical way to explore future solutions and amending them accordingly. Prototyping is furthermore highly tangible.
- **Testing** is the sub-process of moving from prototyping to real-life settings, for example in a geographically selected site. Testing is little about method, but much about being sensitive to the unforeseen elements in real-life.
- **Implementing** refers the final phase in the process (besides scaling), and is primarily about leadership and direction, and less about design thinking. However, tools from design thinking can prove useful. As an example, managers can use some of the work that was done in the visualization- and prototype-phases to evoke support in the organization.

Table 3.3 is a condensed version of different accounts of a design-driven innovation process. The model is based on Bason's (2010) model of design thinking, but in order propose a more comprehensive account of potential methods that can be used under each phase, I have conferred with other models as well.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See appendix 10 for an overview of different versions of design thinking and design-driven innovation.

		... is about	... done through (methods)	... involving
Phase 1: Knowing	1 Challenging the problem	understanding what the problem/ opportunity is. ("fuzzy front" end of innovation)	<b>kick-off workshop(s) creating:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem trees</li> <li>• theories of change</li> </ul>	project team. Possibly done in two rounds, where a group of external agents are invited.
	2 Project scoping	designing the process.	<b>decision-making:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time frame &amp; key activities</li> <li>• setting goals about value outcome</li> <li>• resources</li> <li>• + identifying stakeholders</li> </ul>	project team, with input from management.
	3 Citizen-centered research	understanding the lives and contexts of citizens.	<b>Research, such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment of existing data - and mapping current knowledge gaps</li> <li>• involvement of external experts</li> <li>• observation</li> <li>• in-depth qualitative interviews w/citizens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contextual interviews</li> <li>○ Retrospective interviews</li> </ul> </li> <li>• cultural probes</li> <li>• quantitative surveys</li> </ul>	project team, external experts and citizens.
Phase 2: Analyzing	4 Pattern recognition	structuring data by uncovering patterns and structures of beliefs, behavior.	<b>Inductive approach:</b> Structuring data ( <i>transcribed interviews, photos video clips, etc</i> ) into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• themes</li> <li>• steps of a service process</li> <li>• segments (groups of citizens)</li> </ul>	workshop with project team.
	5 Visualization	seeing people and services in a real life context.	<b>specific tools to visualize people and contexts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personas</li> <li>• service journeys</li> </ul>	project team and citizens (service journeys).
	6 Identifying insights	collaborative interpretation of findings.	<b>presenting stakeholders to the insights generated from pattern-recognition (4) and visualization (5).</b> →→→ E.g. by showing video materials. Illustrates the often powerful out-side-in view.	project team. Top- and medium level decision-makers and strategists. Also front-line staff.
Phase 3: Synthesizing	7 Idea generation	developing new ideas and describing possible futures.	<b>idea generation processes such as</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mind setting / thinking inside a different box</li> <li>• conscious obstacle [benspænd]</li> <li>• temporary anonymity</li> <li>• innovation labs</li> </ul>	project team, people from other parts of the org. and people from outside of the org.
	8 Selection	evaluating ideas to find the three that is pursued.	<b>Evaluation methods such as</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• according to set of criteria</li> <li>• coordinate system</li> <li>• 'bullet eye'</li> <li>• dot-voting / butterfly exercise</li> </ul>	project team.
	9 Concept development	moving from simple ideas to well-described solutions. (...and re-evaluated)	<b>The development of concepts</b> e.g. through a description of (as minimum): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• objective</li> <li>• content</li> <li>• value proposition (<i>or benefits</i>)</li> </ul> (some organizations have fixed models or standards for this)	project team.
Phase 4: Creating	10 Prototyping	Moving intangible concepts into the physical world and making them tangible.	<b>Illustrating, building, writing and playing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical models</li> <li>• story-telling</li> <li>• story-boards</li> <li>• service prototypes</li> </ul>	project team and citizens to obtain immediate feedback.
	11 Testing	real-life trials of prototypes.	<b>Pilots as small-scale real-life setting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g. a smaller geographical site</li> <li>• maybe systematically (through randomized control trial set-ups)</li> </ul>	project team and citizens. (Real-life setting = real-life people)
	12 Implementing	putting a solution into practice.	<b>leadership and direction</b> - implementation is primarily a management challenge	Project team, management.

**Table 3.3: Co-creation: a model of applied design thinking**  
(Bason 2010: 140)

### 3.3 Theory part three: Organizational learning

Studying the process that led to the birth of TGK is not only interesting from the point that it created a novel and better meal-service. It is also interesting from the point that design-driven innovation touches the deeper layers - or shared understandings - of an organization. In order to understand what design thinking *does* to an organization, I use literature about organizational learning, when I address the third sub-question: "*In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of The Good Kitchen?*"

This section explains the link between design thinking in public sector services and organizational learning. In academia, this link is not very well described. As a consequence, I suggest that we combine two models in order to create the necessary link between design thinking and organizational learning and in particular, the notion of *shared mental models*. From this, I suggest that we combine the following two models:

- Beckmann & Barry's (2007a; 2007b) model: 'Innovation as a learning process embedding design thinking'. (Figure 3.3)
- Kim's (1993) OADI-SMM model, and in particular the part regarding *shared mental models*. (Figure 3.4)

Beckmann & Barry's (2007a; 2007b) model provides us with a qualified starting point by suggesting that we see innovation as involving two sub-processes: a creational process (design-process), where new solutions are generated, and a (experiential) learning process that takes place parallel to the design process. However, the model has the substantial shortcoming that it is concerned with *individual learning* only.<sup>47</sup>

To cope with this, I introduce a **second model** to the equation that shares the same theoretical foundation<sup>48</sup> as Beckmann & Barry's model, but allows us to link design thinking to learning on an *organizational level*.<sup>49</sup> The model is Kim's (1993) OADI-SMM model. I subtract the notion of *shared mental models* in organizations from the model, and suggest that we use this to understand the link between *organizational* learning and design thinking.

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<sup>47</sup> In the article (2007a), the learning perspective is introduced as "models of how people learn" (Beckmann & Barry 2007a: 25). Also, by emphasizing 'individual learning styles', it is clear that learning refers to 'individual learning' - not organizational learning (Beckmann & Barry 2007a: 29)

<sup>48</sup> Experiential learning theory (Beckmann & Barry 2007a: 28; Kim 1993: 38, 40). Kim (1993) refers to Lewin - and not Kolb. This probably owes to the fact, that Lewin is widely considered to be the 'father of social change theories'. I argue that since both are rooted in experiential learning theory, they are compatible.

### 3.3.1 Innovation as a learning process embedding design thinking

Beckman & Barry (2007a) suggest a generic<sup>50</sup> model combining design thinking with a model of *how people learn* in an integrated perspective on innovation (Beckmann & Barry (2007a: 25).

See figure 3.3.

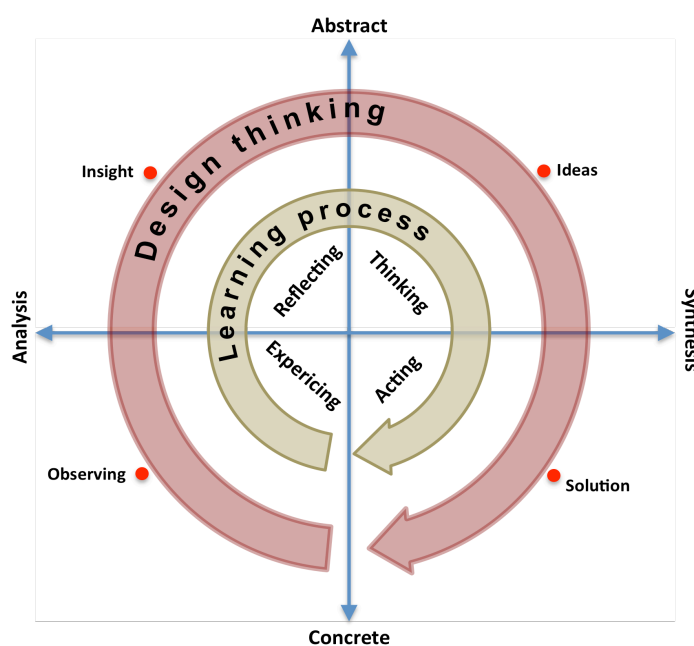


Figure 3.3: Innovation as a learning process embedding design thinking  
(Adapted from Beckman & Barry 2007b)

As illustrated in figure 3.3. a principal feature of the model is that innovation (as a process) is comprised by two processes *or streams*: A design thinking process and a learning process. It is furthermore noteworthy that Beckmann & Barry's (2007a) perspective on design thinking is very much in line with how I account for design thinking in section 3.2. However, since present model is grounded in experiential learning theory, the notion that design thinking involves a constant movement between analysis and synthesis,<sup>51</sup> as well as between the concrete *realms of practice* and the abstract *realms of theory* and (Beckmann & Barry 2007a: 27) should be highlighted.<sup>52</sup> This owes to the theoretical foundation of experiential learning theory that I explain next.

The **learning part** of the model is grounded in Kolb's theory on experiential learning theory, where learning is defined as a highly iterative "*process where knowledge is created through the*

<sup>50</sup> The model is generic and thus applicable across sectors. This allows me to use it in a public sector context, even though is exemplified in a business context. (Beckman & Barry 2007a: 29)

<sup>51</sup> Also described in section 4.3.2: Abduction allows the design thinker to bridge the gap between splitting (analysis) and putting together (synthesis) (Bason 2010: 137)

<sup>52</sup> The title of Kim's (1993) article on the subject.

*transformation of experience"* (Beckmann & Barry 2007a: 28-29). Learning is a *process of change* that arises from experience (Beckman & Barry 2007a: 29), or what is described elsewhere as a *"cyclical interplay between thinking and doing"* (Carroll et. al. 2003: 575). Individual level learning occurs through a circular process of *"concrete experiences, forming abstract concepts and generalizations based on those reflections, and testing those ideas in new situations, which leads to another concrete experience"* (Kim 1993: 38). In short, this approach to learning is highly practical and emphasizes that learning is not only a mental process, but involves (social) processes of *doing*.

I use this perspective, because I am occupied with understanding how TGK, has influenced on learning in the organization, and furthermore, because of the very pragmatic process of TGK, where project participants were activated in workshops, kitchen activities and other *experiential* processes; traits of the process that resembles how learning is perceived from an experiential learning perspective.

However, this model has the shortcoming that it only accounts for learning on an individual level. In chapter 6, when I analyze the learning implications related to TGK, I focus on *organizational learning*. In order to accommodate this shortcoming, I bring in a version of experiential learning theory that operates on an organizational level, in which organizational learning is understood as emanating from the individual members of the organization (DeFillippi & Ornstein 2003: 25, 29-30; Carroll et. al. 2003: 575).

I elaborate on this further in the next section, where I introduce a *second* model: Kim's (1993) OADI-SMM model (figure 3.4). Combined with Beckmann & Barry's model, this model enables us to investigate the *organizational learning implications* from design-driven innovation, and in particular how individual learning is interrelated with the shared mental models of organizations.

### **3.3.2 Organisational learning and shared mental models**

Kim (1993) defines organizational learning as the situation, where *an organization's capacity to take effective action is increased"* (Kim 1993: 43). Organizations thus want to build and enhance organizational learning because it increases their capacity to *"cope with rapidly changing environments"* (Carroll et. al. 2003: 575; (Spicer 2002: 4).<sup>53</sup>

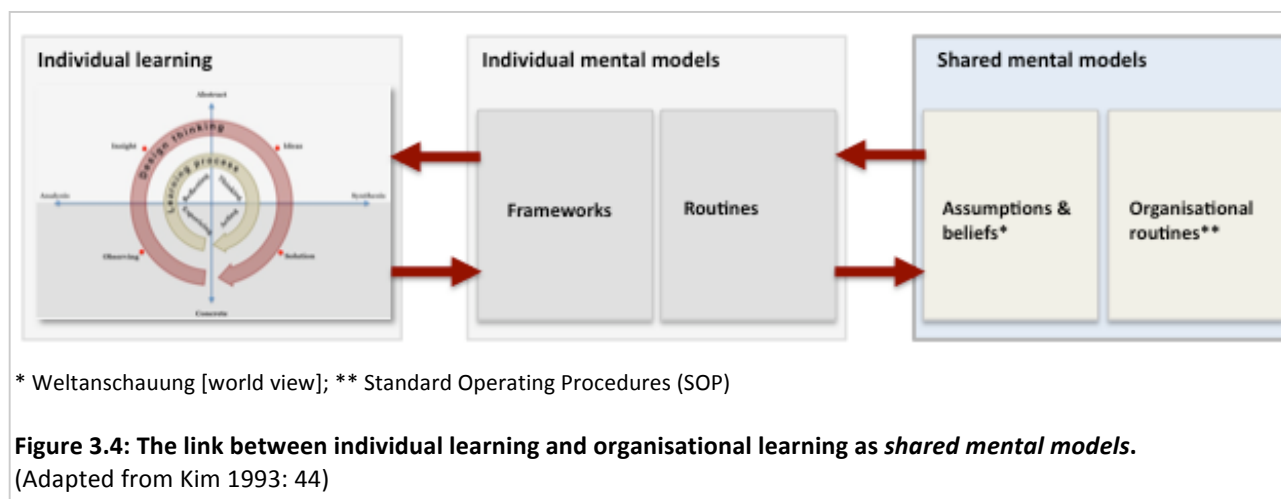
Changes in existing shared mental models (or understandings), or the building of new ones, are *indicators* of organizational learning (Spicer 2002). The emergence of *new* understandings

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<sup>53</sup> Spicer (2002) notes organisations can also learn incorrectly or integrate inappropriate or harmful behaviour (Spicer 2002: 6).

reflects a more fundamental learning than a situation, where *existing* understandings are amended (Spicer 2002: 8).

Kim's (1993) OADI-SMM<sup>54</sup> model is based on the assumption that "*the mental models of individuals' heads are where the vast majority of an organization's knowledge lies*" (Kim 1993: 44). In a simplified version of the model, I illustrate how the shared mental models of an organization evolve, when individuals learn and hereby transform their (own) individual mental models. As illustrated in figure 3.4, individual learning is impacting on *and* influenced by individual mental models, and individual mental models (framework and routines) are again influencing *and* influenced by shared mental models of the organization (Kim 1993: 43). The key point here is that *individual learning* and *organizational learning* as shared mental models, are mutually constituted via changes in individual mental models: When individuals learn (through practical experiences), it impacts on their organization as well as the other way around.



An important point to make is that organizational learning is not simply an additive of individual learning. Kim (1993) refers to the mistake of *anthropomorphizing*<sup>55</sup> organizational learning. Just like an organization is more than a collection of individuals, so is organizational learning more than the sum of individual's learning reservoirs (Kim 1993: 40, 44).

**Shared understandings or shared mental models** reflect the collective worldview of an organization, and they determine organizational action (Kim 1993: 44; DeFillippi & Ornstein 2003: 30). Changes in shared mental models, or the uptake of entirely new shared understandings, are

<sup>54</sup> Also referred to as 'Integrated Model of Organisational Learning' (DeFillippi & Ornstein 2003: 30).

<sup>55</sup> Anthropomorphic means to take human shape.

reflected on two levels: In *assumptions and beliefs*, and in *organizational routines*. (Kim 1993; Spicer 2002)

Kim (1993) refers to the deep level of organizations' mental models as 'weltanschauung'. This level contains the assumptions and beliefs that define *organizational routines* (Kim 1993: 45). A particular 'kind' of learning applies to changes in the *assumptions and beliefs* of an organization. Spicer (2002) refers to different ways of labeling this level of organizational learning: *higher level, active, double loop, generative learning* etc. The point is that learning at this level interacts with existing assumptions and beliefs. (Spicer 2020: 7)

Organizational routines contain the information needed for an organization and its members to conduct specific tasks (Spicer 2002: 7). And similar to *Weltanschauung*, a particular kind of learning is also causing changes in existing organizational routines or creating entirely new routines or new ways of working. This 'kind' of learning is interchangeably labeled *operational learning, single-loop, adaptive* etc. (Spicer 2002: 7; Kim 1993: 45).

### 3.3.3 Summing up on a learning perspective on design thinking

Since my case study is grounded in individuals accounts of how they have experienced the process leading to the development of TGK, I use a perspective on organizational learning that includes individuals as well as their learning experiences.

Kim's (1993) OADI-SMM model, and in particular the notion of shared mental models of organizations', forms a useful framework for understanding how individuals' learning experiences impacted on the shared understandings of the kitchen, furthermore since TGK reflects design-driven innovation in practice, we need a framework allowing us to understand the particular learning experiences from design thinking. Beckmann & Barry (2007a) offer a useful framework for this, and suggest that we perceive innovation as a dual process comprised by both design and learning.

**This third chapter** established the theoretical foundation that I build the further case study on. The analysis is from here structured around three sub-questions, which direct our attention towards different aspects of TGK. This framework includes lenses offering us the opportunity to understand such different aspects of the case as:

- *Arguments for and catalysts of innovation* (sub-question 1 → analysis part 1)
- *Design thinking in practice* (sub-question 2 → analysis part 2)
- *Organizational learning from design-driven innovation* (sub-question 3 → analysis part 3)

# 4. Analysis part I: Arguments and catalysts of innovation

This chapter investigates the reasons for initiating the project as well as the catalysts driving the process. This chapter is directed towards answering the following sub-question:

**Sub-question 1:**

"Why was The Good Kitchen initiated and what catalyzed the process?"

We need more innovation in the public sector. Nobody seems to disagree with such a postulate. If we adopt Young Foundations' definition of innovation as "*new ideas that work*" (Mulgan 2007: 8), it makes sense to study a case like TGK, because it represents innovation that worked.<sup>56</sup> By uncovering the reasons for initiating the project as well as the driving forces behind it, we gain insight into the decisive, early phase of the project.

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<sup>56</sup> I explain project outcomes and effects in section 1.3.

TGK was partly funded by EBST as a pilot-project demonstrating service-design deployed in public sector organizations. Obviously, financial support made the project attractive for both Holstebro Municipality as well as the design agency, H&B.<sup>57</sup> Still, investigating the reasons to initiate the project is interesting, since I do not believe that the funding argument in itself offers us a substantial answer to why the project was initiated.

In the following, I will approach and explain the initiation of TGK from two sides:

- **The first section** (section 4.2) explores the reasoning behind initiating the project. This section investigates on a more *abstract level*, why TGK was started.
- **The second section** (section 4.3) sheds light on the actual catalysts of innovation. What or who fuelled the process that led to the birth of TGK?

Before exploring the initiation of TGK, the next section explains the matchmaking between Holstebro Municipality and H&B.

The financial set-up of TGK involved that the public sector organization should finance the man-hours spent during the project.<sup>58</sup> In return, EBST covered the costs from design consultancy. After submitting the application, TGK was accepted as a demonstration project.<sup>59</sup> From the total amount of applications, five key challenges were selected and put online on EBST's website, and design agencies could then respond to the challenges by suggesting ideas as to how they could be accommodated by design.<sup>60</sup> H&B submitted a project description, and were later matched with Holstebro Municipality.

This way of match-making between public sector organizations and private companies is not unusual, when the purpose is innovation and development of new products and services. A report from 2010 evaluating public-private partnerships for innovation [in Danish: OPI], describes how they differ substantially from 'ordinary' private-public partnerships [in Danish: OPP]:

*"What is special about public-private partnerships for innovation (...) is that the relation between the participants cannot be characterized as a buyer-supplier relation with the intention to supply an already known solution. On the contrary, the participants are development partners, whom together explore new, innovative solutions to commonly defined problems."* (Designit 2010: 5)

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<sup>57</sup> H&B's hours were financed by The Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority. The Municipality funded the hours spent on the project themselves.

<sup>58</sup> Holstebro Municipality agreed to spend 50-60 man-hours or app. DKR. 30.000 on the project, according to the project description (Appendix 9).

<sup>59</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>60</sup> Appendix 3, I. 17-24.

Accordingly, we should not think of the partnership between Holstebro Municipality and H&B as a traditional buyer-supplier relation. Both organizations shared a common goal of developing a future meal-service, and both operated on new grounds. Management and kitchen staff were exposed to design thinking for the first time<sup>61</sup>, and equally, was H&B working on a large public sector project for their first time<sup>62</sup>.

#### 4.1 Societal arguments for innovations present in Holstebro

From the literature on public innovation I identified two main arguments for why innovation in social services is needed as explained in section 3.1. The **first argument** refers to the idea that wicked societal problems create a need for redesigning public sector services. The **second argument** refers to changes in citizens' demands and expectations to welfare services. I elaborated on the two arguments in section 3.2.

The next section therefore investigates, whether these arguments influenced on the decision to initiate TKG. I wonder if the management really did take into consideration that society suffers from an apparent *need* for innovation, when the decision to initiate the project was made? This section is therefore not addressing personal motivations for innovation. I separate the levels of analysis, and I discuss catalysts of innovation in section 4.2.

##### 4.1.1 Argument one: A sense of urgency from societal problems

As explained in the theory section on public sector innovation, one of the main arguments of why society needs innovation is that demographic changes will put substantial pressure on society, and thus create a need for innovation. However, none of the two welfare leaders (PSA and ANM) that I interviewed mentioned this, when I asked them to describe the reasons for initiating the project. I had assumed the opposite: That they would refer to e.g. that the share number of senior citizens soon will start to increase substantially. As a societal development this calls for new solutions - potentially also in the field of meal-services.

I furthermore asked to how the municipal kitchen was doing economically prior to the project, since a cost intensive meal-service program could be one reason to innovate. From the interviews, I was informed that the economical shape the Holstebro kitchen was balanced prior to the project, and one interviewee was directly opposing the idea that the financial well-being of the kitchen had anything to do with the decision to initiate the project.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Appendix 5, l. 147-148.

<sup>62</sup> Appendix 5, l. 186-187.

<sup>63</sup> Appendix 6, l. 206-299.

However, a sense of other societal changes was definitely present. Both in regards to the arrival of private companies producing welfare services and thus posing a challenge to a public meal-service, but also in regards to the arrival of a new generation of seniors:

*"(...) we are extremely challenged by the development taking place in society around us. We have to be able to match private suppliers, we have to be able to match new generations, and we cannot just sit here in our own little glass bell, cooking, waiting and hoping for things to be alright." (Appendix 5, l. 705-709)*

This awareness of societal changes can also be found in the project application, where the following excerpt from page one asserts that future generations of seniors will have other lifestyles than seniors today. Life-style changes which will impact on e.g. their food culture:

*"(...) we anticipate that future seniors (consumers) will expect other menus [than today] since many of them have been travelling. Something which we believe will influence on their food culture. This is something we would like to investigate further". (Appendix 9, p. 1)*

TGK was initiated in the midst of one of the biggest reforms in Denmark in recent history. From January 1st 2007, 275<sup>64</sup> municipalities were reorganized into 98 new entities. This reform also influenced on Holstebro where three<sup>65</sup> municipalities became one. Naturally, a reform this size involved considerable organizational challenges. But did this reform create a *need* for change? A positive answer would mean that we can link the occurrence of a municipal reform with the decision to start the project.

In the first interview with PSA, head of secretariat in the department of health and social services, I asked her to describe the reform situation in the municipality around the time when the decision was made. PSA described how she had presented the project idea to the transition committee [overgangsudvalg], which at that time was in charge of the reform in Holstebro, and both committee and the new colleagues, coming in from the other municipal kitchens, had responded positively to the project:

*"To do a project like this in a time, when we are going through such a massive re-organization process... It can be both dangerous (...). On the other hand, it could turn out to be an incredible strength, because a project like this really gave us something to unite around."*  
(Appendix 5, l. 241-251)

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<sup>64</sup> 33 of the 275 municipalities were left unaffected by the reform, merging the remaining 242 into 65 new municipalities

<sup>65</sup> The new Holstebro Municipality consisted after January 1st 2007 of the former Municipalities Ulfborg-Vemb and Vinderup beside the old Holstebro Municipality. As of December 31 2011, Holstebro Municipality was populated by 57.136 citizens. <http://www.holstebro.dk/Indbyggertal-2018.aspx>

From this and other interviews, I did not find grounds to perceive the municipal reform in 2007 as anything else than a convenient context for initiating change.<sup>66</sup> Bason (2010) lists planned, political reforms as one factor that can bring about innovation (Bason 2010: 14). However, the reform did not have decisive character, but neither was it perceived a barrier. TGK was welcomed as a positive occasion to re-organize the municipal meal-service in the new Holstebro Municipality in a time of turbulence due to the reform.

#### 4.1.2 Argument two: Increased expectations

*"My grandmother was old at the time she turned 60. Grandmothers are not old at that age today. (...) We must remember that people have different preferences and desires in regards to their food and meals, (...). We simply need to be able to match the citizens and their needs in a whole number of ways."* (Appendix 5, l. 389-404)

The excerpt is from one interview, I conducted during my visit in Holstebro. It obviously touches upon a key argument found in literature on public sector innovation. That is, how citizens expect more from the tax money they pay, and also how citizens additionally expect more individualized welfare to match their individual needs and preferences (Albury 2005: 51; MM23 2010: 25).

A similar argument is found on page two in the project application, where the purpose of the project is *"To be able to match future citizen's growing and increasingly modern expectations, needs and demands."*<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Summing up: The need for innovation

To sum up this first part of the analysis: Yes, the decision to initiate TGK was to some degree linked to an awareness of a *need* for change. Changes in the preferences of the future generation of senior citizens were of particular concern, as well as a general, yet abstract, awareness regarding the need to adjust to an ever-changing (globalised) world. On the other hand, I did not find concerns regarding demographic changes or similar arguments. Neither did I find expressions of a need for change grounded in economical issues or budget constraints.<sup>68</sup>

What we should bear in mind is that this project was initiated as early as 2007. Even though an agenda concerning innovation in the public sector was existing back then, it is likely that some of the references that the interviewees subscribed too, when being asked about reasons to initiate the project are based on much newer experiences or readings. However, In order to

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<sup>66</sup> For an example see appendix 6, l. 311-315.

<sup>67</sup> Appendix 9, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Appendix 6, l. 206-299.

accommodate this matter of validity, I have enclosed relevant citations from the initial project application that was submitted to EBST in August 2007.<sup>69</sup>

## 4.2 Motivation for innovation. Coincidence or intention?

Where the first part of the section was focused at identifying whether or not, there was a general awareness - or shared notion - about a *need* for innovation, this section investigates where the innovation came from. Can innovation occur out of the blue and happen by coincidence?

Oftentimes, public innovation is criticized for being random (Bason 2010: 1). Was this the case in Holstebro? I use the concept of innovation catalysts to understand the subject matter.

### 4.2.1 The entrepreneur as change catalyst

Early in my research it became clear that TGK as a project had been resting heavily on a few individuals' shoulders. The project was not initiated in the top-management, and neither did it arise among the front-line staff in the kitchen, from new technology, political reform, or specific efficiency demands. TGK was to a large degree catalyzed by one very *dedicated innovator* (Bason 2010: 39).

In the following, I adopt the notion of *innovation catalysts* and argue that we should see the role of one entrepreneur as accounting for the uptake of TGK (Digmann et. al. 2008: 45). Digmann et. al (2008) describe how they - the authors - have not come across one single example of innovation, involving an entrepreneur [*ildsjæl*] (Digmann et. al. 2008: 49).<sup>70</sup> TGK is not an exception. However, I am convinced that the woman in charge of running the project, the head of secretariat in the department of health and social services in the municipality, PSA, fits well under the category of being a true entrepreneur [in Danish: *ildsjæl*].

Entrepreneurs are not necessarily the inventors as such. But they are pivotal agents if innovations are going to be successful. However, in the case of TGK, PSA, was not only the entrepreneur, but also the initiator of the process:

*"I said to xxxx [AMN]: "This is exiting. It involves that we have to jump in without knowing whether it is safe or not. And we have to embark on some processes, which we do not know the outcomes of. Because this is the nature of innovation (...)." (Appendix 5, l. 55-59)*

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<sup>69</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>70</sup> Similar point can be found in a report from 2010 on public-private partnerships for innovation, concluding that innovation is heavily relying on entrepreneurs. (Designit 2010: 14).

In an interview, LLJ, innovation director and partner at H&B, emphasized the importance of these dedicated souls for a project to be successful. She identified PSA as such<sup>71</sup>, and explained how a person like PSA is of decisive importance, when H&B enters into new partnerships:

*"We are very conscious about the chemistry between us [and an external partner]. If we don't feel that there is any chemistry at the first meeting, we don't really want to pursue that project any further".*  
(Appendix 3, l. 999-1001)

I met some very dedicated people, when I went to Holstebro in the fall 2011 to conduct interviews. However, especially one quote stood out from the first interview, I did that day. Preceding the following excerpt was a question about the actual hours spent on the project. I asked PSA as to whether the 50-60 hours<sup>72</sup> written in the original project description had been equivalent to the time that she had actually spent:

*"[Laughing] Well, not at all. I used to say that this has been one of my spare-time occupations (...). And the same for xxxx [AMN], the time she has spent on this as well. She too would laugh about it today..."*  
(Appendix 5, l. 224-226)

One of the characteristics of the entrepreneur is a strong sense of intuition. Not always able to explain why, she knows the right direction. Also, she is able to create confidence and thrust so that people around her feel safe even in the uncertain times of change (Digmann et. al. 2008: 47-48). These traits were reflected in my talks with PSA. The excerpts to pick from were plentiful, but the following expresses a strong sense of intuition:

*"Well, I had seen the project proposal on the website about service design in public services. At that time, I thought that this could be something really interesting from a theoretical point of view, but I also sensed that this playing field was just a place for us to be".* (Appendix 5, l. 33-36)

Curiosity and visions are other traits of the entrepreneurial initiator. The ability to overcome obstacles [benspænd] and turn them around to re-frame current state of things is another entrepreneurial feature (Digmann et. al. 2008: 47). Municipal meal-service is a service area not overwhelmed by attention from neither citizens, politicians nor municipal management. PSA expressed the ability to link such colorless service-area to a broader societal agenda of healthy lifestyle and modern food culture:

*"The development in society has shed light on food and nutrition. And then I was thinking that in the midst of this, the timing [to initiate TGK] was perfect. Just the term "Municipal meal-service", can't you hear it? It's like the grey eminence, just walking around and doing their work..."* (Appendix 5, l. 278-279)

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<sup>71</sup> When being asked about how she had experienced the management i Holstebro, innovation director and partner at H&B, LLJ, replied that PSA "was extremely committed" (appendix 3, l. 273-274)

<sup>72</sup> Appendix 9, p. 2.

To catalyze change among a group of employees who are not overly keen about breaking routines, can be a sizeable obstacle. Even though the kitchen staff gradually became more and more exited about the project as it progressed, the start was not easy. But shedding light on their daily work through external communication helped convince the frontline staff of the project.<sup>73</sup> Mulgan & Albury (2003) describe the two most important motivators in public innovation as *pride* and *recognition* (Mulgan & Albury 2003: 24).

#### **4.2.2 Dedicated colleagues and partners**

Obviously, one person did not carry through the entire project. That TGK ended as an example of successful public innovation, should never be ascribed solely to the presence of one committed entrepreneur.

TGK was conducted as a partnership between the municipality and a design agency, H&B. The designers from H&B were naturally in the favorable yet difficult position to approach the municipal kitchen and its' people from the outside. Digmann et. al. (2008) identifies the "*external glance and the role of the consultant*" as a potential catalyst contributing to innovation (Digmann et. al. 2008: 61). However, despite the obvious value from an external glance into an organization, H&B cannot be ascribed an initiating role in the project, since they did not become involved in the project until after the project-application had been accepted by EBST.

#### **4.3 Summing up: Awareness of societal change and a dedicated innovator**

To sum up, this part of the analysis was conducted in order to find an answer to the first of three sub-questions: "*Why was TGK initiated and what catalyzed the process?*". Investigating the background of which TGK grew from, tells us something about the foundational premises of this successful case of public innovation.

Firstly, the project was funded through a governmental program. This is naturally a pivotal part of the context. However, even though funding was an important factor in the making of the project, *someone* in Holstebro had to take the lead and actually initiate the project.

A general consciousness about societal changes and changed patterns in lifestyle and preferences of future generations of seniors were of decisive importance at the time the decision to pursue the project was taken. The structural reform that changed the municipal landscape at the wake of 2007 was perceived as a positive occasion to engage in a process towards change.

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<sup>73</sup> Appendix 4, I. 563-567.

In large, the project was catalyzed internally by one dedicated innovator, with a clear understanding of both potential pitfalls of working with a sometimes rigid culture of a municipal kitchen, but also a strong intuitive idea about the potentials from service-design and how this approach could bring change to an often overlooked welfare service. Furthermore, this person understood that recognition and positive communication were important aspects to build motivation from. The project was not a case of frontline innovation, but instead an example of 'soft' top-down innovation, since the project was taken up partly due to a governmental program, partly due to one dedicated intermediate manager.



# 5. Analysis part II: Design thinking in practice

Fuss has surrounded design - and in particular design thinking - in recent years. It is a main concern of many design professionals to construe design thinking as an accessible approach. Hereby they strive to take away some of the mystery that people often associate with design. This is a shared ambition for principal design players in the Danish design industry. INDEX: DESIGN TO IMPROVE LIFE® is committed to "*demystifying what is known as "design process"*".<sup>74</sup> Danish Design Centre held a conference in October 2010 with the title "Design Thinking: What's the fuss?", and The Vision of the Design2020 Committee states that their vision<sup>75</sup> is realized the day "*design will be as natural to Danes as caring for the environment*" (The Vision of the Design2020 Committee 2011: 12).

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<sup>74</sup> According to their website [www.designtoimprovelife.dk](http://www.designtoimprovelife.dk), in the menu "About: Design thinking". Accessed on March 20th 2012: [http://www.designtoimprovelife.dk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=17](http://www.designtoimprovelife.dk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=17)

<sup>75</sup> "(...) to make Denmark a society, where design is used to improve people's lives" (Design2020 Committee 2011: 8).

This chapter is a contribution to the effort of demystifying design thinking. We need to address the fuss for (at least) two reasons: **Firstly**, to assess whether design thinking is rightfully celebrated as a valuable driver in the development of new solutions, we must know what hides behind the term. **Secondly**, by confronting the fussiness we may break down potential barriers - mental as well as cultural - standing in the way of releasing the suggested potential of design thinking.

TGK reflects *one* way to deploy design thinking in a public sector context. This chapter thus dissects the deployment of design thinking exemplified by TGK. In this chapter, I seek to find an answer to the following (second) sub-question:

**Sub-question 2:**

"In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?"

In relation to the first argument, the **first part** of the chapter is focused on the particular deployment of design thinking. Related to the second argument, the **second part** explores preconceptions about design and designers as well as actual experiences from a public sector point of view only.

## 5.1 The practical application of design thinking

This section investigates the practical application of design thinking. In order to demystify the term, I dissect the different elements of the process of TGK. I structure this according to the two levels of design thinking explained in section 3.2. That is, *mindset* and *methods*.

### 5.1.1 Design thinking mindset - applied

The following section investigates the idea of a design thinking mindset in a real-life context. It is an exercise in making the intangible tangible in the sense that *mindset* covers implicit principles underpinning a design thinking process. The quest is therefore to find out whether the features constituting the (theoretical) construct of a proposed design thinking mindset, can be confirmed in the case of TGK. I investigate this according to the four *traits* that I have deduced from literature on design thinking: validity-orientation and in-depth knowledge; abduction as a third mode of reasoning; problem-framing and satisfactory solutions; and human-centeredness.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See table 3.2.

### ***Validity-orientation equals in-depth, contextual knowledge***

Design thinking equals a strong emphasis on validity and focus towards achieving in-depth knowledge about a certain phenomenon (Martin 2007: 7). In order to decide, whether this first part of a design thinker's mindset was present in the case of TKG, we therefore need to look at the deployed research strategies.

I have found that in-depth knowledge has been attained through two principal research methods: Observational studies and qualitative interviews.

I learnt, during the interview sessions that the qualitative user-interviews had made it possible to map the seniors' life patterns.<sup>77</sup> Head of section, AMN, emphasized how the user-interviews had provided the project team with an in-depth understanding of their customers, and that the interviews had generated "*stories about the people that we deliver meals to.*"<sup>78</sup>

Also, observations and shorter interviews with the kitchen staff were conducted in order to shed light on the daily routines. From the designer's point of view, working on a project about municipal meal-service had required a lot of factual research,<sup>79</sup> also into the particular geographical context:<sup>80</sup>

"(...) A place like Holstebro, where things are run a bit like in a barter economy [naturaløkonomi]. One may have a daughter, who has a large kitchen garden and therefore supplies the vegetables. Or a neighbor, who has a farm and therefore brings over eggs." (Appendix 3, l. 362-364)

### ***Abduction and the question of what might be?***

An apparent abstract trait of design thinking, which may seem hard to operationalise and apply to a real-life case, is that design thinking subscribes to abduction. Martin (2009) explains the abductive reasoning in design thinking as follows: "*(...) designers live in Peirce's world of abduction; they actively look for new data points, challenge accepted explanations, and infer possible new worlds*". From this operationalisation, I argue that this was actually what the designers did during the project.

Firstly, **new data points** - or new sources of information - were included in the process. By interviewing the seniors and observing the kitchen staff, H&B retrieved data from 'data points' that had not earlier been tapped. Head of secretariat, PSA, mentioned during our first interview, how H&B had accessed valuable 'silent knowledge' by involving the kitchen staff.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Appendix 5, l. 319-323.

<sup>78</sup> Appendix 4, l. 154-155.

<sup>79</sup> According to LLJ, innovation director and partner, H&B (Appendix 3, l. 601-603).

<sup>80</sup> A point emphasised by Kimbell (2003a: 3) explaining the contingency of knowledge.

<sup>81</sup> Appendix 5, l. 357-363.

Secondly, **accepted explanations** were challenged. When the designers questioned the weekly meal-delivery, they challenge *accepted explanations*.<sup>82</sup> And despite resistance was the kitchen staff given new 'chef-like' uniforms that challenges the way the staff used to think about themselves.<sup>83</sup>

Thirdly, **new worlds were inferred**: The restaurant analogy was introduced to the project team in order to direct their minds towards other related fields combining meals and services. Also this reflects a vehicle to help inspire and make the kitchen-staff and management wonder about how things *might be*.

### ***Problem-framing and satisfactory solutions***

Problem-framing means that problems are never defined, but approached dynamically so that it later can be redefined or *reframed*. In addition, design thinking does not pursue optimal solutions, but instead seek a solution that satisfies given criteria or limiting factors.

TGK was, as I accounted for in chapter 4 not initiated as a direct response to a *problem*. However, since the project was supported by governmental funds, there were certain rules and criteria that had to be followed. Designer and innovation director at H&B, LLJ, was positive about this and did not see it as a limitation. Instead, she perceived it as an advantage, in the sense that it defined a space for her to work within:

*"EBST had some criteria, which I think were really good. We had to do it in half a year, it had to be possible to implement, and it had to be cost-neutral. Those were really good frame to work within as a designer. Cool and challenging. Very concrete..."* (Appendix 3, l. 133-138)

Another finding supporting this designerly way of working with problems, was that the kitchen staff and management were surprised about the insights that the project brought up, e.g. that some seniors were embarrassed to have the delivery van standing outside their houses.<sup>84</sup>

Secondly, did both kitchen staff and management express that they were surprised to see how *deep* the project had impacted on the kitchens' ways of working.<sup>85</sup> Something that tells us that the *solution space* was not given initially, but developed throughout the project.

### ***Human-centeredness***

Design thinking pivots around humans, why the involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders is a common denominator found in literature on design thinking (e.g. Brown 2009).

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<sup>82</sup> Appendix 3, l. 566-567.

<sup>83</sup> Appendix 5, l. 590-595.

<sup>84</sup> Appendix 4, l. 335-341.

<sup>85</sup> Appendix 5, l. 630-632; appendix 4, l. 134-136.

Kitchen workers, seniors' a professional chef and the municipal management were all partaking in the process, either as participants in workshops<sup>86</sup> or as interviewees or subjects of observation.<sup>87</sup> From the interviews I did with the project participants as well as by looking at the different project activities (see table 5.3), it is clear that the process was structured to involve multiple stakeholders.

### ***Summing up on the presence of a design thinking mindset***

In the previous section, I investigated to what degree, if any, TGK reflected a *design thinking mindset*. The notion of a design thinking mindset is grounded in an extensive reading through literature about design and design thinking, and thus should until now primarily be seen as a theoretical construct. However, as a part of my endeavor of demystifying design thinking - through the examination of a real-life case-study - this section shows that DGK does reflect all of the four defining treats or principles comprising the mindset of design thinking.

### **5.1.2 Design thinking methods - applied**

This section investigates the actual methods and tools used during the development of TGK. The purpose is to contribute to the *demystification* of design thinking by the use of a real-life case: TGK. I apply Bason's (2010) model of design thinking to support this endeavor.

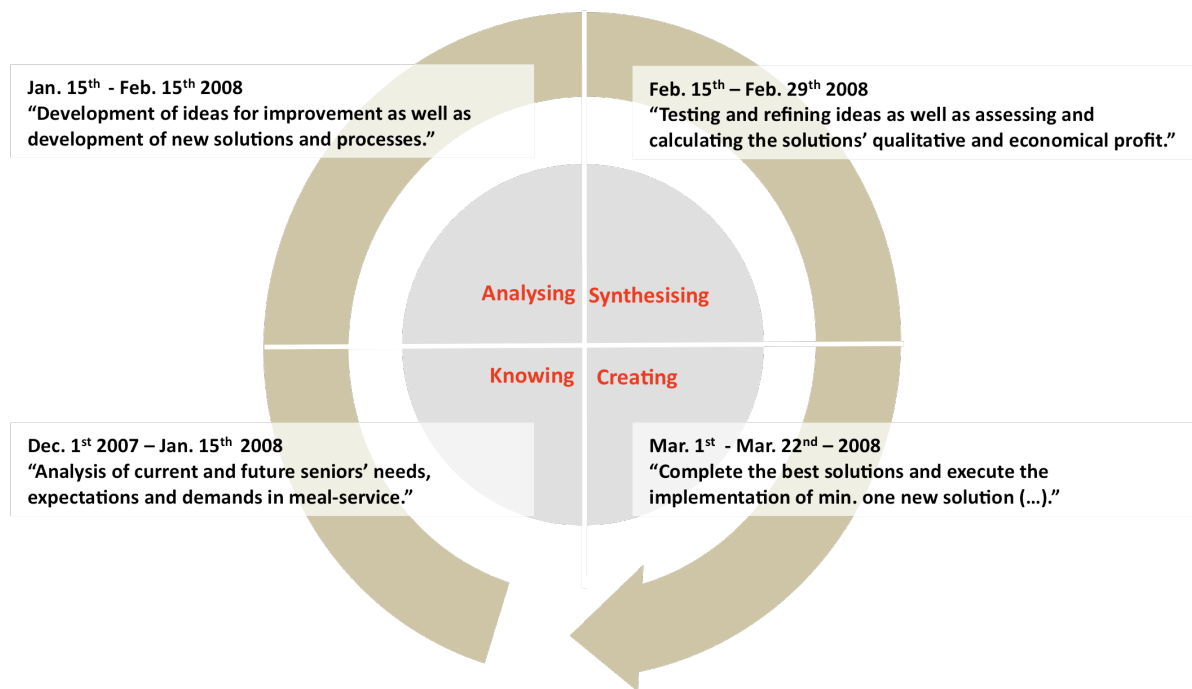
In the figure below (figure 5.1), we see how TGK followed a process that were overall divided into four phases, similar to what was suggested in Basons' model.<sup>88</sup> I have kept the labels denominating the four phases according to Bason (2010), and I account for the specific project activities belonging to each of the phases in the following.

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<sup>86</sup> Appendix 3, I. 516-520.

<sup>87</sup> Appendix 3, I. 228-230; appendix 5, I. 459-462.

<sup>88</sup> Also similar to the design thinking process as suggested by Beckmann & Barry (2007b).



**Figure 5.1: The process of TGK - illustrated**

Adapted from Bason 2010: 141. Phase-descriptions are translated from the initial project presentation, Appendix 12.

The knowing-process is preceded by a 'framing-phase' (Bason 2010: 176). Different factors define how a problem is framed (Bason 2010: 176). Based on the first part of the analysis (see section 4.4), we can define the 'framing factors' as: *firstly*, a general consciousness about societal changes and changes patterns in lifestyle and preferences of future generations of seniors, and *secondly*, a dedicated innovator helped to catalyze and drive the project. Bason (2010: 176) refers to similar factors as *motivations for change* and '*champions of the project*' (Bason 2010: 176).

Table 5.1 illustrates the four phases that TGK went through, phases very similar to those found in Bason's model (2010). However, some discrepancies exist as to how the different phases are defined. In the following section, I argue why.

Phase 1: User-, stakeholder- and process analysis	Thorough and ethnologically based identification of seniors' needs, wants, and demands, including the non- realized and non-articulated needs. Additionally were different experts interviewed, and employees' needs and work processes analyzed.
Phase 2: Idea development	This phases involved a number of idea development workshops with representatives from all citizen groups as well as cooperating partners. Different creative idea development methods were deployed, including radical analogies.
Phase 3: Design development	The different design solutions were developed through systematically iterations between design- and feedback studies, among other things with the help from user-workshops, collaborative design-processes as well as user-friendliness test with prototypes and mock-ups.
Phase 4: Implementation	Design solutions were implemented in between March - May 2008 concurrent with the issuing of the spring meal-service menu. In relation to the implementation has the Elder Council in Holstebro Municipality acted as ambassadors and contributed to ensuring that the many new initiatives were well received by the seniors.
<b>Table 5.1: The four phases of TGK</b> (Adapted and translated from EBST 2012)	

### **Methods for knowing**

Methods for knowing covers the initial phase of a design thinking process, after the framing-process,. As a human-centered approach, design thinking is highly focused at a broad range of stakeholders. (Bason 2010: 179) The phase of *subtracting* relevant knowledge from stakeholders was done through two methods:

- Qualitative interviews
- Observation studies (H&B uses the term 'field studies')

Both kitchen staff and seniors were subjects of investigation.<sup>89</sup> Initially, H&B planned to start their investigation in the homes of the seniors. However, LLJ, innovation director and partner, H&B explained in an interview, how H&B had come to realize the importance of starting in the kitchen in order to show the staff interest and win their thrust:<sup>90</sup>

*"It shouldn't have come as a surprise. Looking back it's commonplace. (...), we should start in the kitchen and the staff working there. To show them... like a basic courtesy, they are the one cooking the meals, right?"*  
 (Appendix 3, l. 223-226)

After conducting short interviews with kitchen staff and observing their daily routines, H&B turned their eyes on the seniors and conducted 24 qualitative interviews with seniors who were

<sup>89</sup> Appendix 3, l. 228-230.

<sup>90</sup> Appendix 3, l. 492-494.

subscribing to the meal-service<sup>91</sup>. As described in table 11, this phase was also named *User-, stakeholder- and process analysis*.

### ***Methods for analyzing***

Methods for analyzing forms the second phase and covers different parts of the process of translating knowledge into structured knowledge (Bason 2010: 180). The *analysis phase* is divided up in three sub-processes: *pattern recognition*, *visualization*, and *identification of insights*. The first two sub-phases was taken care of by H&B, who later presented their findings to the project team as well as a broader range of stakeholders, whereby they merged the sub-process of 'identification of insights' with the 'synthesizing' phases.

Innovation director and partner at H&B explained in an interview, how it had surprised the public sector employees that the analysis part was rather time-consuming, and that this part of the process was 'hidden':

*"I don't think they had expected there to be so much analysis involved. It took a relatively long time before we started to produce something.[after the analysis] (...) we started to produce something for the workshops, we were having..."* (Appendix 3, I. 260-262)

This phase is also not explained in table 5.1, where EBST presents the process.

### ***Methods for synthesizing***

The synthesizing-phase is in Bason's (2010) model explained as the third phase - following that of *analyzing* (Bason 2010: 186). *Synthesizing* is about putting things together. According to Bason (2010) this is done through three steps: 'Idea generation', 'selection', and 'concept development'. This is overall what in table 5.1, is described as "Phase 2: Idea development". In this phase, H&B facilitated a workshop bringing to the table a wide range of different stakeholders. During this workshop, the findings from the *analysis* phase were presented. This workshop also included the introduction of the restaurant metaphor.

### ***Methods for creating***

The creational-phase is in Bason's (2010) model explained as the fourth phase - following that of *synthesizing* (Bason 2010: 186). In table 5.1 *phase 4: Implementation* corresponds more or less to

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<sup>91</sup> Appendix 5, I. 317-323.

Basons' (2010) creation phase. However, where Bason (2010) counts in the implementation phase, this is a phase on its own, according to how EBST presents the process.

However, a key feature of this process is that the potential solutions are made tangible. Different methods were deployed in order to make design thinking concrete. LLJ, innovation director and partner, H&B, describes this phase as follows:

*"And this is where I think, that by using design thinking.... You have to have some prototypes, some mock-ups, and you have to do user-involvement during the process. As a designer, it is my biggest fear that when I let go of my baby, it has to be able to survive (...) otherwise, it is not a success..."*(Appendix 3, l. 152-158)

Thus, to be able to test and evaluate potential solutions, was important in order to ensure, that TGK would be a success - even after the designers had left the building.

### ***Summing up: The design thinking process and the deployed methods***

I have structured the deployed methods and tools - divided into Basons' (2010) four phases of design thinking in a public sector organization. From the methods used in the process of TGK, we see that methods are constituted by a mix of on one side: anthropological methods aimed at analyzing and subtracting *silent knowledge* from both kitchen staff as well as the senior citizens. And on the other side: traditional creative methods for generating ideas. I have illustrated the different methods according to the four phases in table 5.2:

<b>Methods for knowing</b>	Qualitative interviews Observational studies
<b>Methods for analyzing</b>	Data-processing (H&B homework) Pre-paring for workshop... Making of personas Editing video-clips
<b>Methods for synthesizing</b>	Idea-generation workshop w/ kitchen staff, home care unit representatives, senior citizens representatives, local politicians & designers (H&B) Presentation of analysis findings ... through video-clips and personas Introduction to and working with radical analogies
<b>Methods for creating</b>	Proto-typing Mock-ups ...evaluated by kitchen staff and seniors.

**Table 5.2: Methods deployed in the process of TGK, according to Bason's (2010) model of design thinking**  
 Data is subtracted from both interviews and different presentations of TGK.

## 5.2 Working with designers: Assertions from a public sector perspective

This section investigates the preconceptions about design and designers that existing in the minds of the kitchen staff and management prior to the project. Also, I account for how the public sector agents experienced the actual collaboration with the designers. I am curious to know, whether the logics of the public sector clashed with those of design, potentially making collaboration between the two potentially complicated and strenuous.

In this section, I refer to design - not design thinking. Since *design* is a more commonly known term than *design thinking*, I therefore decided that *design* was a better-suited term to use in an interview with e.g. a kitchen worker.

### 5.2.1 The hybrid status of Hatch & Bloom as in-between industries

From the outside, a partnership between a design agency and a municipal kitchen may seem like a somewhat odd match. In literature on creative industries, an often-used antagonism is juxtaposing the traditional business world/the humdrum industries with the creative industries (Caves 2000: 4; Hesmondhalgh 2007: 20). The logic behind this dichotomy is (among others) that industries are driven by different motivations and operate with different perceptions of value. However, H&B cannot be considered a *core* creative business. They describe their consultancy concept as one combining *design research*, *innovation management*, and *communication* (EBST 2009: 18). Like the backbone of design thinking, they operate in between worlds of business and design.

We may then see the hybrid form of H&B as reflecting a world, where industries are 'melting' together. Not only is design thinking in essence advocating for an interdisciplinary way of generating solutions. H&B themselves employs a very diverse group of people - creatives as well as non-creatives - and supply services that are spanning from graphic design to service design etc. The dichotomy of humdrum vs. creative businesses can therefore only be seen as an ideal-typical construction. By instead seeing it as a continuum, H&B would be somewhere in the middle.

With this in mind, I am curious to understand, what expectations and preconceptions, the public sector employees had in regards to H&B prior to the project, as well as understanding, how they actually experienced the collaboration. What characterized their attitude towards these people working in this *hybrid* design agency?

### 5.2.2 Assertions about design and designers

From the interviews, I have subtracted four key assertions, which sums up how the public sector agents perceive working together with designers from H&B. Since the project was completed (successfully) years before I conducted the interviews, it is likely that the interviewees' perceptions have been 'polluted' by later experiences, and thus are biased. This is a premise of this study.

However, with this in mind, I distinguish between *preconceptions* and *experiences*. I understand *preconceptions* as the attitudes towards design and designers existing in the minds of the public sector agents *prior* to the project. In contrast are *experiences* referring to the perceptions formed *after experiencing* working with design and designers.

The four assertions are:

- **Assertion one** (*pre-conception*): Designers make pretty brochures
- **Assertion two** (*pre-conception*): Designers are creatives with a quant approach to things
- **Assertion three** (*experience*): Designers operate with a special perception of time and space
- **Assertion four** (*experience*): Designers are really good partners (we like them)

#### ***Assertion one: Designers make pretty brochures***

Since none of the public sector agents had worked with designers prior to the initiation of TGK, I was curious about potential preconceptions about this particular group of professionals. The interviews displayed that the public sector agents had very few ideas about what to expect from a design agency. The daily manager of the kitchen, AMN, described, how she used to link design to brochures, leaflets and graphic design:

*"To hear the word 'designers' made me think about brochure design. That would have been my first thought: "Okay, let's have some nice material [brochures etc.] made". I didn't think at all about user involvement and service-design (...) that was definitely not what I had in mind at first."* (Appendix 4, I. 92-96)

My interviews with the kitchen staff informed me that a traditional perception of designers as creatives occupied with design of physical artifacts like clothing, furniture and - as the excerpts above illustrates - brochures.<sup>92</sup> When I interviewed, LLJ, innovation director and partner at H&B, she confirmed this.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Appendix 5, I. 144-14; appendix 6, I. 200-202.

<sup>93</sup> Appendix 3, I. 247-258.

**Assertion two: Designers are creatives with a quant approach to things**

An inherent aspect of the public-private partnership involved the meeting of two diverse work cultures. I wanted to explore this, since I was curious to know, whether this was purely a prejudice of my own. In an interview with the daily manager of the meal-service, AMN, I asked her to how she had perceived designers prior to meeting the team from H&B. A previous job in an advertising agency had formed her preconceptions towards designers:

*"Some years ago, I worked at an advertising agency, (...). I got a really good impression of advertising people. And then I thought that designers had to be a bit like advertising people. The kind of people with energy and where there is action all the time. Fascinating people..."* (Appendix 4, l. 102-105)

I asked the same question to the PSA, head of secretariat in the department of health and social services. She explained how she prior to the project had thought of designers as creative people with a skew or *quant* approach to things.<sup>94</sup> Being involved in the process of TGK had only confirmed her perception.<sup>95</sup>

From the interviews I learnt, that both welfare leaders and staff shared the preconception of designers having a quant approach to their work, compared to their own way of working, and that this to a large extent were confirmed in the project.

**Assertion three: Designers operate with a special perception of time and space**

This third assertion relates to the actual experiences from working together with designers. In order to understand how the municipal leader perceived the differences between their own way of working, and the designerly way of working, I asked head of section, ANM, to explain this from her point of view:

*"We are very, very different. If you take a general look at people working in kitchens, you'll see that we like to think inside-the-box, rigorous, everything has be structured, like this... [knocking the table three times]. We work after schedules, recipes, and timing. We are just very different from them."* (Appendix 4, l. 110-115)

Furthermore, PSA , mentioned how she had had concrete experiences that had reminded her that the designerly way of working differed from her own 'municipal world'. Where a municipal organization is driven by deadlines and a hierarchical structures, the designer, at least this was how she put it, operates with a totally different perception of time and space, e.g. that a phone-meeting could take place at 9pm.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Appendix 3, l. 168-178.

<sup>95</sup> Appendix 3, l. 186.

<sup>96</sup> Appendix 3, l. 187-190.

#### ***Assertion four: Designers are good partners (we like them)***

Beside the challenging aspect of the partnership, the welfare leaders expressed an overly positive attitude towards the designers, when looking back at the project. AMN, head of section, explained that she had been positively surprised to learn, how well they matched on a personal level.<sup>97</sup> A similar perception was expressed by the head of secretariat in the department of health and social services:

*"Somewhere or another it's hard for me to come up with something that really annoyed me. We just had some really good partners [in H&B]."* (Appendix 5, l. 5)

Similar expressions were found in the interviews that I conducted with the kitchen workers. A very positive attitude towards the team from H&B characterized the picture that they painted of the collaboration - despite differences in ways of working.<sup>98</sup>

### **5.3 Summing up:**

I analyzed TGK according to the two levels of design thinking: mindset and methods. In regards to *mindset*, all four traits<sup>99</sup> of a design thinking mindset was found reflected in the process of TGK. In relation to the specific *methods* deployed during the process, I found that TGK displayed many of the tools suggested in literature on design thinking and design-driven innovation.

The second part of the analysis section addressed preconceptions about design and designers as well as actual experiences from working with designers – seen from a public sector point of view. I found that prejudices about design pivoted around two assertions from the public sector agents' point of view: Firstly, that the public sector agents to a large degree shared a traditional understanding of design. Also the management and kitchen staffs had anticipated that the designers had a *quant* approach to work. Evaluating the collaboration with the designers resulted in additionally two assertions. Firstly, an assertion suggesting that designers way of working contrasted the spreadsheet structure found in a municipal kitchen, and secondly, an assertion about a friendly and accepting nature of designers.

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<sup>97</sup> Appendix 2, l. 128.

<sup>98</sup> Appendix 8, l. 190-192; appendix 7, l. 220-222.

<sup>99</sup> See section 3.2.2 for details on *mindset*.



## 6. Analysis part III: Learning from design thinking

As my research progressed, I started to think about the concept of core tasks of public-sector organizations. What triggered my attention, was the idea that design thinking challenges what welfare organizations perceive as their core task(s). A notion that touches on a fundamental discussion about the future of welfare society, where politicians and leaders, in present hours of crisis, struggle to define what tasks to cut out of the welfare portfolio, and which to preserve.

One way to frame this, is to investigate whether design thinking holds the potential to change the (invisible) mental models of an organization, which define the core tasks of an organization.

Inspired by Beckman & Barry (2007a), this section links and explores the learning implications from design-driven innovation. More precisely I am occupied with analyzing if and how the process created a *new shared mental model* in the municipal kitchen. I apply

organizational learning theory in order to address and answer my third sub-question:

**Sub-question 3:**

"In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of The Good Kitchen?"

This section is divided into three sections. **First part** analyses changes in the deep layers of the organization. **Secondly**, I analyze changes in procedures and routines. **The third part** sums up the findings. Next, I discuss the consequences from applying an organizational learning perspective to TGK.

The process of TGK activated the collective knowledge of the organization, by involving both kitchen staff and management in the different workshops throughout the project. Since TGK as a process heavily emphasizing interaction and *doing* (Beckmann & Barry 2007a), I use experiential learning theory and in particular, the concept of shared mental models, as my perspective on organizational learning.

Shared mental models reflect organizations' collective *worldviews*, and we can understand organizational learning either as *changes in* or as the *building of entirely new* shared mental models (Kim 1993; Spicer 2002).

A particular project element illustrates the connection between design thinking and learning: The *restaurant analogy* was introduced by H&B during an idea-development workshop. Jointly, the interviewees referred to the analogy as a true eye-opener.<sup>100</sup> As a contrasting *thought world*, the analogy challenged the existing mental models of the municipal kitchen (Carroll et. al. 2003: 576). Furthermore and due to its' simplicity, the restaurant analogy is an example of how design thinking does not have to be abstruse or *mysterious*.<sup>101</sup> (See table 6.1)

**Table 6.1: The restaurant analogy - explained**

"During a workshop we are talking about some different pictures, about how we see them, and what we experience and what we think is happening on them (...) At some point or another, all this has a connection to our restaurant analogy. (...) From this, you have this aha-experience and this, how do you say... Some kind of altered focus and higher consciousness that we can use to define, how we would like TGK to be like. And through this thought-process, people [kitchen staff], who are not used to sit like this and discuss things... They are offered this common thought world (...) a really exiting way to guide very different people into the same line of thought and then have them add in with dreams and ideas about how they would like things to be."

(Appendix 5, l. 100-114)

<sup>100</sup> Appendix 5, l. 93-108; appendix 3, l. 531.

<sup>101</sup> Which relates to the second sub-question of this thesis: Design thinking in practice. See chapter 5.

As my analysis is mainly based on interviews with agents involved in the project, I approach organizational learning from a theoretical perspective that allows me to emphasize individuals learning experiences. Vera & Crossan (2003) defines organizational learning as "*the process of change in individuals and in their shared thoughts and actions*" (Vera & Crossan 2003: 123). Analyzing organizational learning - enabled by the design-driven process of TGK - therefore involves that I account for changes in how leaders and front-line staff *thought* and *acted* in relation to their work.<sup>102</sup>

In relation to this, organizational learning is understood as the *institutionalization of changes* in how the members of the organization act (- and to a certain degree *think*) (Vera & Crossan 2003: 123). I put "to a certain degree think" in parenthesis, since I presume that changes in how people think eventually result in behavioral changes.

A critical aspect concerns validity. Understanding *learning as changes in how people think and act*, presumes that I can access information about how agents *used to* think and act *before* the project was initiated. How else can we tell whether things have changed?

Preferably, I had conducted the interviews before the project was initiated as well as after. Since the project was completed in 2008 such research strategy is not possible. However, from conducting multiple interviews with people leading as well as working in the kitchen, I have learnt that the stories told are actually very consisting.<sup>103</sup>

In order to accommodate this potential pitfall of validity, I enclose interview-citations directly in the text, in order to let the interviewees speak for themselves.<sup>104</sup>

The distinction between *individual* and *organization* learning is furthermore related to the validity concern explained above. *Individual learning* is present, when individuals change their way of working - and thus, way of thinking. *Organizational learning*, on the other hand, presumes consistency in how organization members act (and think)<sup>105</sup>. How can we otherwise talk about changes as being institutionalized, if they are not shared, but merely diffused and sporadic?

Consequently, I aim at finding support for the enclosed citations in at least two of my interviewees. Individuals' ability to influence an organization is considerably larger in small

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<sup>102</sup> Referring to the definition of organizational learning, as the *process of change in individuals and in their shared thoughts and actions* (Vera & Crossan 2003: 123).

<sup>103</sup> Naturally, there are nuances in how greatly the different actors emphasise particular situations, as well as nuances in the importance they ascribe to them.

<sup>104</sup> For limitation reasons, I also refer to extracts in the transcribed interviews.

<sup>105</sup> As mentioned earlier, I presume that changes in how we think eventually result in behavioural changes.

organization, compared to a medium- or large organization (Kim 1993: 40). As a small organization, we should pay attention to individuals' perceptions, when studying the municipal kitchen in Holstebro.

## 6.1 Shared understandings - level 1: Changes in assumptions and beliefs

Assumptions and beliefs refer to the deeper layers of the organization such as *the culture, deep-rooted assumptions, artifacts, and inexplicit behavioral rules* (Kim 1993: 45). This section is therefore about investigating, how the process leading to the birth of TKG challenged the deep-rooted assumptions and beliefs of the organization.

After coding the interviews, I found that changes in *assumptions and beliefs* were expressed around four topics related to the kitchen's identity as well as staffs' professional identity:

- *From producer of meals* → **to producer of services**
- *From making meals for senior citizens* → **to serving guests and understanding their needs**
- *From anonymity* → **to active relation-building**
- **Project challenging core tasks and professional identity**

In the following four sub-sections, I account for each topic describing the changes in the deeper layers of the organization.

### 6.1.1 The kitchen becoming a service producer

Change was among other things manifested in an emerging service-awareness. As an example, had the kitchen staff come to realize, how the seniors perceived the mealtime to be a highlight of their day. A realization that had made *scales fall from their eyes*.<sup>106</sup> In the same interview, it was stressed that the restaurant analogy had contributed to the emerging understanding of the kitchen as a service-provider.<sup>107</sup>

Another insight was that the kitchen staff in their daily work started to think about the *real people*, they were cooking for. Head of section, AMN, expressed it like this:

*"This understanding of who it is we're cooking for. That is a whole new realization. It's not like we just cook, and the minute the meals have left the door, then we stop to care. We have to know what happens afterwards and the feedback we get. We actually do think about Mrs. Jensen, when we make the gravy." (Appendix 4, l. 545-549)*

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<sup>106</sup> Appendix 5, l. 583-588.

<sup>107</sup> Appendix 5, l. 728-735.

Also, she expressed how H&B had opened the kitchen staffs' eyes towards inviting their customers inside the walls of the organization. Something that she thought had helped them become more *service-minded*.<sup>108</sup>

Becoming a service-provider also included getting to know about the people, whose needs the kitchen provides for. Exemplified through the restaurant analogy, the kitchen started to perceive their customers - the senior citizens in Holstebro - as guests.

### 6.2.2 Serving *guests* and understanding their needs

During the project, observational studies and user-interviews with seniors were converted into a number of personas,<sup>109</sup> in order to visualize the particular tastes, resources and needs of the different segments of seniors that the kitchen serves. One of the insights that were highlighted in interviews with representatives from the project team was that some seniors were embarrassed to have the delivery van parked outside their homes. For them, it was a visible sign to no longer being self-reliant, and something that they would like to keep private.<sup>110</sup> A project initiative meant that the delivery vans were given a makeover, and today look less 'municipal' and more interesting.<sup>111</sup>

Another insight was that the seniors were lacking the opportunity to serve dinner or snacks, when family and friends visit. To remain as self-sufficient as possible, the seniors wished to preserve their social life. AMN, head of section, explained how the introduction of guest-meals were directly linked to the kitchen starting to focus on the needs and wants of its' customers:

*"(...) Listen to the customer, when the customer for example says: "Well, I need to invite guests over, because as I woman, I have always cooked, and I'm really sad that I cannot do this anymore."*  
(Appendix 4, l. 160-165)

Today, seniors have possibility to order extra portions in advance in case someone drops by.

Members of the kitchen staff in addition highlighted the restaurant analogy. BJE, the daily operations manager in the kitchen, reflected upon the effects of working with the restaurant analogy:

*"(...) Words that could never pass our lips prior to the project... Before we used to address them 'users'. But they [H&B] called them 'guests', our guests. In some way or another it became more personal for the people we cook for, even though there are 600 of them."* (Appendix 7, l. 290-293)

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<sup>108</sup> Appendix 4, l. 264-267.

<sup>109</sup> A 'persona' is a fictive character built from research about users. A persona usually represents a group of users.

<sup>110</sup> Appendix 3, l. 540-545; appendix 4, l. 338-340.

<sup>111</sup> Appendix 4, l. 341.

Together with the analogy, the kitchen was introduced to a whole new vocabulary, converting seniors into *guests*.<sup>112</sup> As this interviewee notes, words are powerful since they impact on how we think.<sup>113</sup>

Besides learning about the senior citizens and adopting the notion of perceiving them as 'guests' the project also involved that the kitchen gave up its introversion and started to build relationships with the seniors.

### 6.2.3 Replacing anonymity with active relation building

A third dimension of deep change refers to the kitchen building relationships with the seniors. In a interview with nutrition assistant, TDK, I asked her to explain what she saw as the reason for the kitchen to offer the seniors small give-away's, such as cookies and flowers, around Christmas and Easter:

*"Well, I think that we show them [the seniors] that we care for them, and that we respect them even though we cannot see each other. (...) So someone is thinking about them. That is the signal we would like to send. That we are happy to have them as our customers."* (Appendix 8, l. 232-241)

She explains the importance of showing a human side of the kitchen, something that is supported by the introduction of monthly newsletters, where pictured and written portraits of the kitchen staff inform the seniors about the 'real' people preparing their meals. Since most seniors have their meals delivered, and therefore never physically visits the kitchen, this is a way to offer the seniors a peek inside in the kitchen.

In general, this change is heavily reflected in some of the tangible project outputs. Besides small giveaways and newsletters, the kitchen now encloses empty post-cards every time they send out a new menu to the seniors<sup>114</sup>. The post-cards are for the seniors to write comments, critique or praises on, in order to let the kitchen know how they like the food.

### 6.2.4 Challenging existing perceptions of professional identity

In general, the kitchen has undergone a fundamental change. A new visual identity, post-cards, newsletters and menus are some of the tangible signs of change. However, this fourth dimension of deep change differs from the first three in the sense, that this dimension is not reflected in *any* tangible project-related outcomes

This dimension of change in the deep layer of the organization is interesting from the point that substantial changes in how the staff thinks about their own professionalism and professional

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<sup>112</sup> Appendix , l. 292.

<sup>113</sup> This new, common vocabulary was in an interview described as a *codex* (Appendix 5, l. 690-693).

<sup>114</sup> The kitchen sends out new menus 3-4 times a year - following the seasons.

identity influence on the organizations' capacity to act effectively, e.g. ability to adapt to the needs of future senior citizens, something that is linked to how I explained organizational learning in chapter 3.3 (Carroll et. al. 2003: 575; Spicer 2020: 4). Additionally, this point is supported in theory suggesting that we see organizational learning as a matter of *identity formation*. Elkjaer (2003) explains this as a situation, where people develop and form their identities through partaking in organizational activities (Elkjaer 2003: 43).

During my interviews with both management and staff, I asked them to assess how their participation in the project had influenced on the way they perceived their own professional identity. Even though this may be a somewhat abstract question, all interviewees provided me with clear answers and confirmed, what I expected: that the process had made them reconsider some of the core aspects of their work. Some however, were offering a more thorough account of what these aspects covers. Others, like TDK, nutrition assistant working in TGK, offered me this answer:

*"(...) For some reason you [herself] feel that what you [herself] are doing is more valuable."*  
(Appendix 8, l. 262-263)

I asked the same question to the daily kitchen manager, BJE. She also confirmed that the project had impacted on how she sees her job today. In particular, she mentioned that the project has made her become more quality-conscious, and made her set higher standards for her work.<sup>115</sup>

Furthermore, I asked AMN, head of section, to assess whether she thought that the project had influenced on how the kitchen staff perceive their job. She confirmed that the project had challenged a group of professionals that she describes as culturally stubborn and heady:

*"(...) This is changed. (...) I believe that they [kitchen staff] think that it is good to do something to uphold their work place, and vi [management] oftentimes tell them, that it is important to have customers, and that we have to provide for them [customers] and continuously develop ourselves. And they do take part in it."*  
(Appendix 4, l. 409-415)

Also she explained how the content of the kitchens' service had changed considerably:

*"The service that we offer has changed. (...) Now we have changed the diets offers and take much more care of the individual senior. If for instance someone calls us with a special inquiry, we have a look at it. The room for what is possible has increased a lot."* (Appendix 4, l. 419-425)

Later in the interview, AMN, asserted that even though she had always liked her job, the project had made her feel more happy and proud about the organization, she is running:<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Appendix 7, l. 393-394.

<sup>116</sup> Appendix 4, l. 473-482.

Also the kitchen staff expressed that their work life had been enhanced by the project. One expressed that since her job had become more interesting after the project was started, she liked it better today.<sup>117</sup> The daily manager in the kitchen, BJE, had a similar experience, and expressed that having more challenging work tasks today satisfied her.<sup>118</sup>

From the interviews, I learnt that the project has influenced considerably on how both kitchen staff and its management perceives their own professional identity. Consistently, they express how their work has become more meaningful and how they also value the challenges from new tasks. However, I cannot conclude, whether the perception of core tasks has changed, but it is clear that the project has strengthened the common perception of what the core tasks of the kitchen are. As an example, has a general awareness about the importance of putting the needs of the customer in the centre, emerged.

### **6.2.5 Summing up: Impacts from design thinking on assumptions and beliefs**

In the previous sections, I discussed how TGK has caused rather fundamental changes in the deep layers of the organization. However, changes were also found in how the staff perceives their professional identity. Reading from the interviews, this was a rather consistent change, and I therefore include it into the account of organizational learning.

## **6.3 Shared understandings - level 2: Changes in routines of operation**

The project brought about changes in the daily routines and ways of working in the kitchen. Earlier, I accounted for the changes that occurred in the deep layers of the organization. The second part of shared mental models is, according to Kim (1993) the know-how and routines of an organization (Kim 1993: 41). These may change due to changes in the environment or due to changes in the foundational assumptions and beliefs. One way to investigate organizational learning in the case of TGK is thus to elucidate changes in routines and working procedures.

After I coded the interviews according to changes in procedures and routines, I learnt that such changes were manifested largely around two themes:

- Changes in menu, recipes and in how meals are decorated.
- Changes in job-functions and areas of responsibility

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<sup>117</sup> Appendix 7, l. 28-29.

<sup>118</sup> Appendix 8, l. 31-44.

### 6.3.1 Quality focus involves other ways of working

In general the kitchen has become more quality-conscious and more focused on enhancing the meal-experience of their customers. This has involved a number of changes in how the meals are cooked and served.

One of the tangible, new initiatives involved the development of a whole new menu-concept, where the menu is decided according to the seasons. The daily manager of the kitchen, BJE explained how the menu now reflects the time of year, so "(...) *you can taste what season, we're in*" (Appendix 7, l. 20).

Also the project has worked on making the meals more appetizing. Many elders struggle with little appetite and underweight, and by making the meals appear savorier, the kitchen addresses this problem. The daily kitchen manager describes this new focus on food-aesthetics:

*"(...) Something we think a whole lot about today... That is: "How is the color combination of a the food? How is it placed in the boxes? Are we decorating the food well enough?"* (Appendix 7, l. 118-120)

A third manifestation of changed working-procedures regards a quality enhancement of the meals produced in the kitchen. H&B brought in a professional chef early in the process, who both assessed 'state of the art' in the kitchen and in addition acted as a coach and trainer helping the kitchen staff to develop a more tasty and appealing menu.<sup>119</sup>

During my interview with TDK, nutrition assistant, we talked about the ways in which the project had impacted on her daily work. She noted how they have started to pay much more attention to the quality of the meals and explains that over-cooked vegetables today would be discarded.<sup>120</sup> Other routines were challenged as well:

*"We started to use double cream and that thing called Lurpak [Danish butter brand] instead of margarine. Actually, we knew this already, but again... It was like: "Are we aloud to do this? Can we afford it? No, we are used to doing things like this, so let's keep it that way." That kind of thing was turned upside down."* (Appendix 8, l. 63-66)

As a way to ensure a continuous focus on taste and quality, the kitchen now holds a weekly *taste panel* session, where the staff evaluates the previous week's dishes, and today, this panel is a part of the kitchens self-checking procedures.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Appendix 5, l. 424-427.

<sup>120</sup> Appendix 8, l. 104-107.

<sup>121</sup> Appendix 4, l. 626-631.

### 6.3.2 Empowerment of kitchen staff

The project has also created changes in the organization of the kitchen. A general change is that more tasks have been delegated to the kitchen staff. Partner and innovation director, LLJ commented on this aspect of the project during the interview. It was her experience that the project had resulted in greater distribution of tasks, meaning that kitchen staff had received greater responsibility after the project was initiated:<sup>122</sup>

*"(...) As an example the degree of which the staff is involved... That is a really good example. For us, you see, it made no sense, that they [kitchen staff] just stood there as machines, packing and wrapping. Not allowing them to take part in some of the fun stuff." (Appendix 3, l. 554-657)*

This was also reflected in the interviews I conducted with members of the kitchen staff. One of the kitchen assistants expressed that she found her job more interesting now than prior to the project. Today she takes part in ordering groceries and organizes the weekly taste-panel.<sup>123</sup> The daily manager in the kitchen, BJE also mentions how her own work routines have changed for the better as a result of a changed organizational structure. Today she is less involved in the daily production in the kitchen, and thus spends much more time on planning the forthcoming menus, describing the courses and writing newsletters<sup>124</sup>. Something she really likes doing.

### 6.4 Summing up: Substantial changes in shared understandings

This part of the analysis dealt with the learning implications from design thinking as exemplified by the case of TKG. I accounted for the emergence of a new, shared understanding in two steps. Firstly, I explained the changes that have occurred in the deeper layers of the organization, changes that were related to the rise of a service-awareness. Getting to know about the seniors' needs and wants has also brought about changes in how kitchen perceives their customers - or guests. Another dimension relates to the fact that the kitchen has taken-up the notion of building relations to its customers. Changes in the deeper layers are also reflected in how management and staff have amended perceptions of professional identities.

Changes in routines of operation are manifested in two principal ways. New ways of workings followed a newly gained service-awareness. Also has the work in the kitchen been organized differently, so that more tasks today are distributed and thus is the staff given greater responsibility.

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<sup>122</sup> Appendix 3, l. 654-668.

<sup>123</sup> Appendix 8, l. 9-11.

<sup>124</sup> Appendix 7, l. 18-19; 36-37.

The design-driven process that I investigate in this thesis, not only lead to the development of a new meal-service concept that we know as TKG. Also the process brought about organizational learning, reflected in the creation of a new, collective understanding of what it means to be a municipal kitchen; an organization supplying seniors with their daily meals. The process illustrates how a public-sector organization can change and become a more thrust-worthy and whole-hearted service-provider that serves, knows about, and builds relations with its customers. Also we saw how a process like TKG caused changes in the way the public sector employees perceive their professional identity. The learning implications from design thinking were in other words substantial.



## 7. Conclusion

Design thinking reflects how design has undergone a fundamental change. Design thinking differs from the common understanding of design, and informs us that design is no longer solely about designers imposing style and brilliant design on their surroundings. Today, design is deployed in settings that we normally would not associate with creativity or design. As a result hereof has the discipline diversified, and consequently redefined the term. Design thinking is design *redefined*.

Perceived as a driver of innovation, those in favor of design thinking argue that it can be used to develop radical and novel solutions to future welfare services. From this we see why Governments and leaders in the public sector have started to pay interest to this new design practice.

This thesis is a case study of The Good Kitchen, a project exemplifying the deployment of design thinking in a public sector context with the purpose of creating a better meal-service to senior citizens in the city of Holstebro, Denmark. I conduct an in-depth study of this case, since we hereby are offered the opportunity to get below the surface of design thinking, and from an applied perspective see what design thinking involves. For one thing, this is needed in order to address the hype that surrounds design thinking. Following this, there seem to be a general perception of the term as abstract, inaccessible and even unscientific - ideas that are possibly

fuelled by the sudden-flash-of-insight mystery associated with the traditional and more artistic versions of design.

A central assumption in this thesis is that we should not *only* pay attention to the tangible outputs from innovation driven by design thinking. To get beneath the surface of design thinking involves considering the more subtle changes from design. With this in mind, I chose to explore *changes* from design thinking, instead of retaining a focus on innovation and outputs. Following research question has guided my thesis:

**What were the reasons for initiating The Good Kitchen,  
and in what ways did design thinking bring about change?**

Started in 2007, TKG was one of the first cases to demonstrate the deliberate use of design thinking in public sector services. Owing this, I investigate why and by whom the project was initiated. Combined with the ambition to understand also the hidden impacts from design thinking, this provides us with the basis for a tripartite research design, displayed by the following three sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1:**

"Why was The Good Kitchen initiated and what catalyzed the process?"

**Sub-question 2:**

"In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?"

**Sub-question 3:**

"In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of The Good Kitchen?"

## **7.1 Sub-question one: Reasons to innovate and catalysts of innovation**

This first part of the analysis explored the initial reasons to initiate TKG as well as the catalysts – the driving forces of the process.

TKG was funded through a governmental program aimed at building knowledge about the potentials from applying design in a public sector context. Financial support was a decisive element in the decision to proceed with the project, but naturally someone had to take up the idea and carry it into effect. My research shows that TKG was initiated, not as a part of a larger municipal strategy, but to a large degree by coincidence. Randomly, the head of secretariat in the department of health and social sciences had come across the governmental program aimed at service-design projects in public sector organizations. However, the completion of the project was

in contrast a result of a deliberate and structured work towards implementing a new meal-service concept.

Also, I was curious to find out whether a possible awareness of a need for innovation had influenced on the decision to initiate the project. A topic that occupied the kitchen management was the idea that future generations of seniors will subscribe to other preferences, tastes and needs, than seniors today. A finding that confirms the presence of *the second argument for innovation* identified in literature on public sector innovation.<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, I analyzed the driving forces behind the project. I found that the project to a large degree was resting on a few individuals' shoulders, and in particular catalyzed *internally* by one dedicated innovator, according to Bason (2010), a common situation the public sector (Bason 2010: 15). TKG furthermore reflects a soft version of *top-down* innovation, since the project was taken up partly due to a governmental program, partly due to a dedicated intermediate manager.

## 7.2 Sub-question two: Design-thinking in practice

Second part of the analysis was aimed at exposing the content of design thinking, since it is widely understood as abstract and inaccessible. Also, this part investigated how the public sector agents perceived design and designers prior to the project, as well as how they actually experienced the collaboration with H&B, the design agency involved.

I analyzed TKG according to the two levels of design thinking: mindset and methods. In regards to *mindset*, all four traits<sup>126</sup> of a design thinking mindset was found reflected in the process of TKG. The process involved methods aimed at attaining in-depth knowledge about the people 'using' the meal-service; kitchen staff and seniors. Also, in order to imagine how a future meal-service could be like, new data points were tapped, accepted explanations challenged and new worlds were inferred.<sup>127</sup> The project additionally mirrored a designerly way of *framing* problems. The project was furthermore completed within a set of criteria decided by EBST, which reflects that no key problem was pre-defined, only framed. Lastly, in regards to mindset, the project was built up around the involvement of a diverse group of people, as well as a strong focus on users.

In relation to the specific *methods* deployed during the process, I found that TKG displayed many of the tools suggested in literature on design thinking and design-driven innovation. In particular, the project strongly emphasized qualitative research. From the interviews, I learnt that

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<sup>125</sup> See section 3.1.2

<sup>126</sup> See section 3.2.2 for details on *mindset*.

<sup>127</sup> This relates to Martin's (2009) operationalization of abduction.

those methods had generated eye-opening insights. Another method of principal importance was the restaurant analogy, which the project participants largely experienced as a lucid vehicle to move focus away from every-day kitchen routines, and stimulate thoughts and dreams about, how a future meal-service could be like.

The second part of this sub-question addressed preconceptions about design and designers as well as actual experiences from working with designers – seen from a public sector point of view. I found that prejudices about design pivoted around two assertions from the public sector agents' point of view: Firstly, that design largely was associated with style and visual designs, not surprisingly reflecting the common understanding of design. A second preconception was that the public sector agents anticipated designers to have a *quant* approach to work, a prejudice that was later confirmed.

Evaluating the collaboration with the designers resulted in additionally two assertions. Firstly, an assertion suggesting that designers operate with a certain perception of time and space, contrasting the spreadsheet structure found in a municipal kitchen, and secondly, an assertion about a friendly and accepting nature of designers.

### **7.3 Sub-question three: Learning from design thinking**

In the last part of the analysis, I introduced an organizational learning perspective to the equation. Since I endeavored to understand changes resulting from the project - as holistically as possible - a natural consequence was to investigate the subtler and less tangible effects from design thinking.

Due to a primarily deductive approach, I coded my interviews according to the two levels comprising organizations' shared mental models. In total, I found that the project had created such substantial changes to the organization that a new shared understanding of what comprises the core of municipal meal-service for seniors has emerged.

In regards to the shared assumptions and belief comprising the deep layer of the mental models, changes were evident in regards to four particular dimensions. Besides becoming service- and customer oriented, the kitchen has also changed the way it connects with its customers. Lastly, I found that the project also has made management and kitchen staffs reconsider their own professional identities.

Also, I investigated potential changes in the organizational routines. Those pivoted around two main topics. Enhanced quality-focus has influenced on the daily routines in the kitchen. Weakly taste panels and food styling are some of the evident examples of this change. Secondly,

work is delegated to a much larger degree today, than prior to the project, offering the kitchen workers more responsibility and a greater variety in tasks.

## 7.4 Final conclusion

This case-study illustrates design thinking in practice. My ambition, among others, has been to account for design thinking so that a term, widely perceived as inaccessible and abstract, became more graspable and lucid. After studying design thinking, both on a very abstract level, as provided by academia on design research, as well as on a concrete level through a close study of design thinking in practice exemplified by TGK, I have come a little closer to understanding the subject matter.

From my study of TGK it is evident that the qualitative methods, which generated in-depth contextual and eye-opening insights, mixed with the different project activities involving a diverse group of stakeholders, were some of the decisive factors of the project. I furthermore believe that the strength of design thinking lies in its' practical and inclusive approach to problem solving - a suggested trait that stands in stark contrast to the common perception of design thinking as abstract and inaccessible. Design thinking is not rocket science, but nor is it unscientific. Based on my findings, I thus suggest that we understand design thinking as *when (traditional) design competencies are translated into a problem solving framework, and supplemented with methods and research criteria from social sciences.*

One conclusion of this thesis is that a new shared understanding emerged from the process of TGK. This, I believe, tells us something about the magnitude of change that design thinking has the potential to create. It is furthermore interesting from the point of view that such fundamental changes are widely believed to be prime requisites for radical change in organizations. However, since the link between design thinking and organizational learning has not received much attention from academia – reading from the quantity of articles on the subject matter - further research is needed into what design thinking *does* to the organization hosting it.

I find it relevant to stress that I by no means consider design thinking to be a perfect cure for the magnitude of wicked problems that society today is facing. In the next chapter, I discuss potential grounds for further research and address important factors impeding design thinking from being widely adopted by public sector organizations.



## 8. Food for thought and grounds for further research

Since 2007 different programs supporting the endeavor to create insights into design of services - and in particular public sector services - have resulted in a considerable body of case examples.<sup>128</sup> For that matter, the governmental programs subsidizing the public-sector design projects have fulfilled their goal.<sup>129</sup> But if we scan the current landscape of design in public sector services, we see that few projects today are executed independent of governmental funding.

This chapter discusses the present state of design-driven public sector innovation, and suggests that we conduct further research into potential factors impeding design thinking from being independently adopted by the welfare organizations. Also I suggest grounds for further

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<sup>128</sup> Innovation Centre Copenhagen (2011). Danish Design Centre has a collection of cases on their website: <http://www.ddc.dk/cases>. Case compilations are also available at the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority's website: [http://www.ebst.dk/servicedesign\\_er](http://www.ebst.dk/servicedesign_er) (e.g. EBST 2009; EBST 2010). Websites were accessed on February 12th, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> The Danish Government (2007).

research into the consequences and benefits from deploying design thinking in a public sector context.

## **8.1 Fuss impedes design thinking from being adopted in a risk-averse environment**

The lack of radical welfare innovation is by scholars linked to the risk-averse culture of public sector organizations (Digmann et. al. 2008: 77; Boomert 2010: 20). The logic is that since the public sector is tax-funded and thus accountable to the citizenry, its organizations are more sensitive towards failure, and therefore less inclined to engage in risky activities. Innovation involves uncertainty in the sense that outcomes are seldom clear, simply because we rarely know precisely what a given innovation process generates. A risk-averse culture may thus impede radical innovation and also the uptake of new frameworks for change, including design thinking as it is largely surrounded with fuss and perceived as abstract and inaccessible.

What I am suggesting here is that we consider whether a stereotypical understanding of design thinking exacerbates the perceived risks that potential adopters associate with this framework. For one thing, we need to further investigate how the public sector leaders perceive design thinking and in particular the risks that they associate with this practice. By considering public sector organizations to be characterized by a risk-averse culture, we see why the endeavour of demystifying design thinking is such an overt concern of the design industry.<sup>130</sup>

A second factor that may explain why design thinking is not a widely adopted in the public sector, relates - not to nature of the public sector - but to the very foundation of design thinking. I elaborate on this in the following section.

## **8.2 Dissemination is challenged by the nature of design thinking**

A dominant concern in discussions about public sector innovation pivots around how already developed solutions are spread to other regions, municipalities etc., so society's money is not spent on reinventing the wheel – a critique of the many local and isolated innovation projects. We may see the uptake of design thinking as depending on whether the practice is able to demonstrate solutions that can be scaled and transferred.

In the following, I argue that solutions developed from design thinking are difficult to transfer and scale because of the very nature of design thinking. In particular, I suggest that this is conditioned by the context-dependency of design thinking. Even though further research is needed before we can assess the link between the nature of design thinking and the difficulties of

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<sup>130</sup> See chapter 5.

disseminating it to other contexts, there is reason to consider whether the validity-orientation of design thinking actually hampers it from being used widely.

The argument is that design thinking is stuck in the environment, where the initial solution was developed, because design thinking is so strongly occupied with contexts, in-depth knowledge and the involvement of local stakeholders. From this point of view design thinking creates solutions that are *context-specific*, as opposed to generic.

However, even though the dissemination of design thinking may be challenged by the risk-averse culture in public sector organization as well as its context-dependency, other aspects of design thinking may be particular well-suited in a public sector context.

### 8.3 Advantages of design thinking: safety and inclusion

Endeavours to demystify design thinking have generated case compilations and reports in recent years. But since few design driven projects in the public sector are conducted without special funding, this effort cannot be seen as entirely successful. However, in the following I present a two main arguments supporting that we reconsider the potentials of design thinking in a public sector perspective, despite the apparent disadvantages.

**Design thinking creates psychological safety:** During the interview-sessions, it became clear to me that the kitchen staff and management had experienced the process as pleasant and not particularly challenging.<sup>131</sup> Of course this can be reasoned in the fact that people tend to forget unpleasantness over time, but another possible explanation is that the process created an organizational climate characterized by *psychological safety*. That is a work climate where *employees are safe to speak up without being rejected* and where failure is widely accepted (Baer & Frese 2003: 50, 53). An open-minded attitude towards failure was among other things something stressed as an important project outcome in the interviews.<sup>132</sup>

**Design thinking engages staff in a plain and pedagogic manner:** As I accounted for in chapter 3.1, design-driven projects are generally characterized by co-creation involving a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the entire process. We may see this feature of design-driven innovation as increasing the need for a safe environment even more, since projects condense the

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<sup>131</sup> Appendix 5, I. 208-211; appendix 8, I- 34-37.

<sup>132</sup> Appendix 4, I. 605-613.

collaborations in a team (Baer & Frese 2003: 50). Success is likely to depend on whether the involved stakeholders feel safe and free to speak up and thus contribute to the process.

However, another argument supporting that design thinking is well-suited to drive change in public sector services, and in particular in organizations producing core welfare services, is that design thinking is highly practical and involves frontline-staff in the development of new services. The kitchen staffs working in TGK had not been exposed to innovation processes prior to the project, and was therefore not *trained* innovators. In this respect design thinking provides the inexperienced innovators with the involvement needed to comprehend the process as it proceeds. Change by design thinking is highly visible for the staffs, since they are continuously involved as co-creators. In the case of TGK, the staff were presented to the findings from the analysis-sessions as well as involved in different workshops where solutions were developed through prototyping and mock-ups. Also the use of personas deployed to explain the staff about the complex need of the different seniors that the kitchens serves, can be seen as a pedagogic tool to deliver a complex and theoretical message in a plain and accessible way. During the interviews, I found that both kitchens staff and management in general had experienced the project as both pedagogical and inclusive.<sup>133</sup>

To see design thinking as something educative and pedagogical stands in stark contrast to the fuss surrounding design thinking. As a consequence, I suggest that we direct our attention towards the learning implications of design thinking in order to be able to explain potential takers (in the public sector) about the possible outcomes of a design driven process. Instead of new cases explaining specific outputs, we should emphasize the practical, pedagogic and engaging approach to change offered by design thinking.

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<sup>133</sup> Appendix 6, l. 195-202; appendix 8, l. 187-192.

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## Appendix 1

### Interviewee information

Interviewee (initials)	Title	Organisation	Date of interview	Place of interview	Appendix no.
Semi-structured interview					
Lotte Lyngsø-Jepsen (LLJ)	Innovation director and partner, project manager of The Good Kitchen.	Hatch & Bloom LLJ	January 6, 2012	Hatch & Bloom, Frederiksholms Kanal, København	3
Anne Marie Nielsen, (AMN)	Head of section in the municipal meal-service section.	The good kitchen, Holstebro Municipality AMN	October 11, 2011	The Good Kitchen, Holstebro Municipality	4
Poula Sangill (PSA)	Head of secretariat.	Department of health and social services, Holstebro Municipality. PSA	October 11, 2011	Department of health and social services, Holstebro Municipality. (2nd interview via Skype)	5 + 6
Birgit Jespersen (BJE)	Daily manager and catering officer.	The good kitchen, Holstebro Municipality BJE	March 9, 2012	Telephone interview	7
Tina Dam Kristensen (TDK)	Nutrition assistant.	The good kitchen, Holstebro Municipality	March 9, 2012	Telephone interview	8
Background interviews					
Kaare Kristensen (KKR)	Project manager	Danish Design Centre	June 7, 2011	Danish Design Centre	
Poula Sangill, (PSA)	Head of secretariat.	Department of health and social services, Holstebro Municipality	September 19, 2011	The Good Kitchen, Holstebro Municipality	

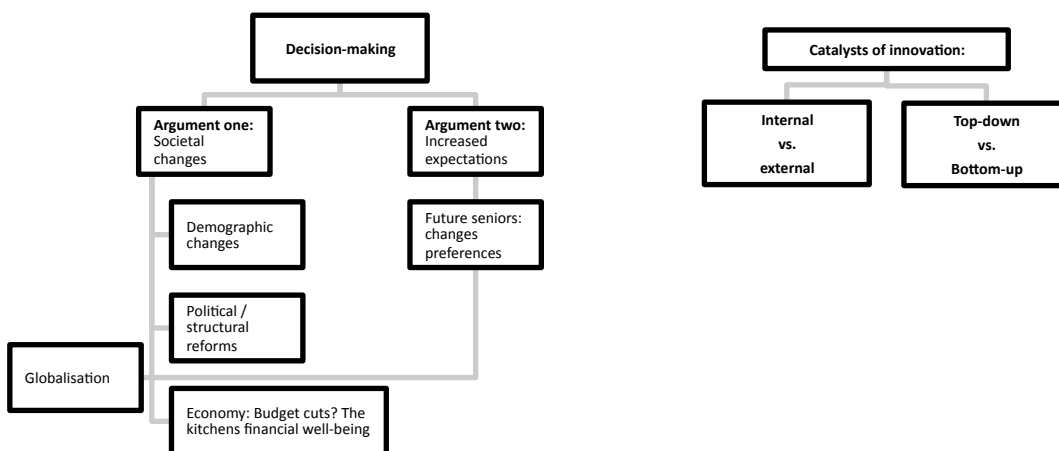
## Appendix 2

### Code trees

Sub-question 1: *Why was TGK initiated and what catalysed the process?*

Themes:

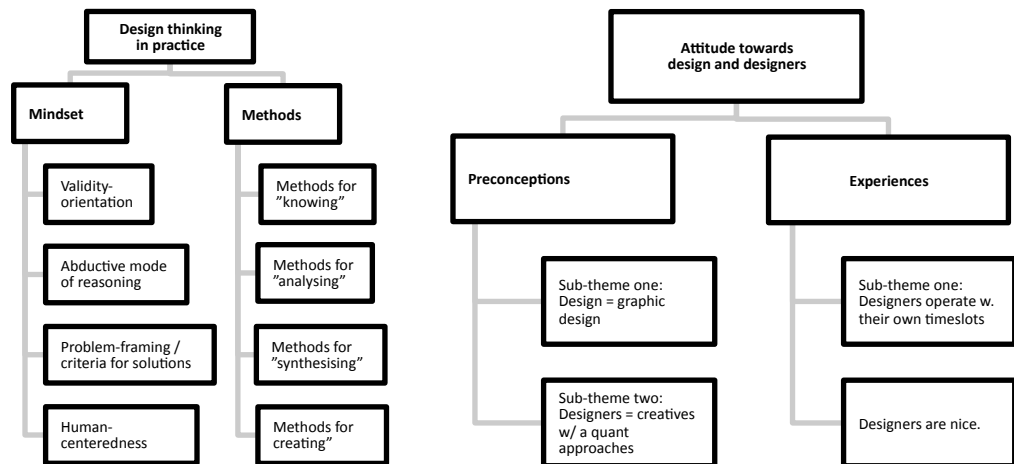
- Decision to initiate TGK
- Catalysts of innovation



Sub-question 2: *In what ways was design thinking applied during the project, and how did management and kitchen staff conceive and experience design and designers?*

Themes:

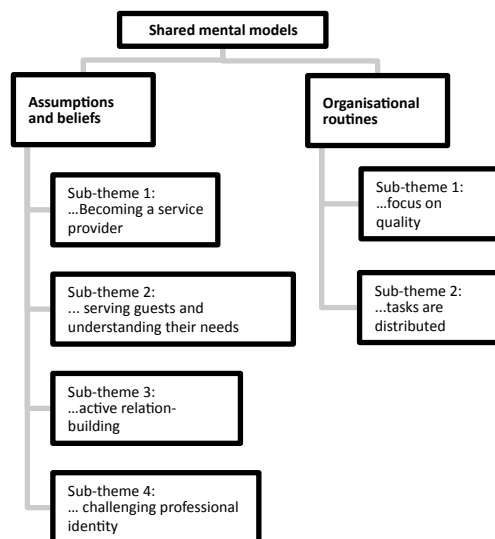
- Design thinking in practice
- Attitudes towards design and designers



Sub-question 3: *In what ways did design thinking influence the shared mental models of TGK?*

Theme:

- Organisational learning (as reflecting in changes in shared mental models).



## Appendix 10

## Different versions of design-driven innovation

Literature	Framework for design-driven innovation
Bason 2010 <sup>134</sup> : Design thinking process (co-creation)	knowing → analysing → synthesising → creating
Verganti 2009 <sup>135</sup> : Process of design-driven innovation	listening → interpreting → addressing
Stickdorn et. al. 2010 <sup>136</sup> : Service-design thinking process	exploration → creation → reflection → implementation
Brown 2009 <sup>137</sup> : Process of design thinking	inspiration → ideation → implementation

<sup>134</sup> Bason 2010: 141.<sup>135</sup> Verganti 2009: 13.<sup>136</sup> Stickdorn et. al 2010: 122-124.<sup>137</sup> Brown 2009: 16.

**Project application, October 24, 2007**

**Demonstrationsprojekter vedr. servicedesign af offentlige serviceydelser**  
**Ansøgningsskema til beskrivelse af problemstillingen**

<p><b>1. Titel på projektforslaget</b></p>	<p><b>"Glad for Mad"</b></p> <p>Holstebro Kommunes Madservice har et ønske om at øge kvaliteten af kommunens madservice-ordninger yderligere, så kommunen fortsat kan sikre sundhed og livskvalitet hos i sær de ældre borgere.</p> <p>Dette kræver bl.a., at kommunen er i stand til at kunne formidle og omsætte Madservice's passion for god sund mad til borgerne, således at de får lyst til at benytte sig af vort tilbud. Dette gælder både for hjemmeboende borgere, der modtager maden i deres egen bolig, og borgere, der benytter sig af tilbuddene i vore caféer. ( Vi har p.t. 5 caféer)</p> <p><u>Vi har følgende formål med projektet:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vi ønsker at øge madservice-kvaliteten yderligere</li> <li>• Vi ønsker at levere måltider af en høj kvalitet og ernæringsmæssig værdi.</li> <li>• Vi ønsker at sætte fokus på tilbud til borgere, der er småt spisende, for derved at kunne sikre dem gode ernæringsmæssige måltider, - måltider der kan friste dem til at spise lidt mere.</li> <li>• Vi ønsker undersøge mulighederne for, hvordan vi kan imødekomme vore ældre borgeres forventninger og behov, såvel i.f.t. god kvalitet og oplevelse af god service.</li> </ul> <p>I denne sammenhæng har vi har en tese om, at kommende ældre borgere ( forbrugere) også vil forvente andre menu sammensætninger, idet mange af dem har haft en større tradition for at rejse, hvilket også forventes at have en afsmittende indflydelse på deres madkultur. Dette kunne være interessant at få undersøgt nærmere.</p> <p>Ovenstående vil vi gerne have hjælp til via servicedesign.</p>
<p><b>2. Projektansøger</b></p>	<p>Holstebro Kommunes Madservice              Social og Sundhed              Holstebro Kommune.</p>

<b>3. Lokal projektansvarlig</b> (navn, adresse, stilling, tlf., mail)	Sektionsleder Anne Marie Nielsen Vesterbo 2 7500 Holstebro Tlf. 20287346 <a href="mailto:Anne.Marie.Nielsen@Holstebro.dk">Anne.Marie.Nielsen@Holstebro.dk</a>
<b>4. Problemstilling</b> – hvilken problemstilling ønskes der designfaglig bistand til at løse.	<p>Som beskrevet i punkt 1 ønsker vi i endnu højere grad at undersøge mulighederne for hvordan vi kan imødekomme vore ældre borgeres forventninger og behov – både i forhold til god madkvalitet og god service. Derfor handler det om at sikre en optimal sammenhæng mellem god service, god kvalitet, et højt ernæringsmæssigt niveau, og et æstetisk indbydende, lækkert måltid mad.</p> <p>Endelig ønsker vi at arbejde med et udviklingsfelt, der sætter fokus på fremtidens brugere og deres forventninger, ønsker og krav til det gode måltid. Forventninger, der tager afsæt i mange borgeres ønske om at leve sundt, leve godt og få nogle gode smagsoplevelser. I arbejdet med netop dette udviklingsområde, ser vi en spændende forløb med eksempelvis dialoggrupper, borgerpaneler og lign. Det er vigtigt for os, at kunne tilpasse vore tilbud til kommende borgeres forventninger og behov.</p>
<b>5. Baggrund for problemstilling</b> – beskriv kort hvorfor problemstillingen er relevant.	<p>Pensionister i Holstebro Kommune har idag mulighed for at vælge deres ugentlige leveringer af mad ud fra et menukatalog, hvori der er 35 hovedretter og 25 biretter at vælge i mellem. Vi har fokus på de gode råvarer, på kvalitet, ernæringsmæssige aspekter og service. Vi vil gerne kunne udvikle vore tilbud, såvel ved at løfte kvaliteten, inddrage ny viden, samt sikre en god formidling af vore tilbud.</p> <p>Hvad vil kommende borgere forvente, og hvordan kan vi på den bedste måde imødekomme deres forventninger og behov.?</p>
<b>6. Målgruppe</b> - hvem er målgruppen for projektet.	Primært hjemmeboende pensionister i Holstebro Kommune. ( herunder indgår også en mindre gruppe borgere der er bosiddende i plejeboligheder)
<b>7. Formål</b> - hvilken forandring skal projektet medføre på lang sigt?	<p>Formålet er:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at øge de ældres livskvalitet og sundhed</li> <li>• at give de småtspisende ældre 'appetitten', hvilket skal ske i sammenhæng med Holstebro Kommunes planlagte indsatsområde: ”Styrk appetitten - måltider til småtspisende ældre</li> <li>• at vi kan matche kommende borgeres stigende og mere moderne forventninger, behov og krav</li> </ul> <p>Projektet skal gerne på lang sigt medføre, at der sættes fokus på ældre borgeres ernæring samt medvirke til at skabe glæde ved et godt måltid mad. Det ernæringsmæssige aspekt er vigtig – og matcher intentionerne i kommunens overordnede sundhedspolitik</p>

<p><b>8. Succeskriterier</b> - hvad skal gerne opnås med projektet på kort sigt for på lang sigt at kunne opnå det overordnede formål.</p>	<p>Succeskriterierne er:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at vi får øget kvaliteten på vores madservice yderligere</li> <li>• at vi får belyst de ældres behov og forventninger, således at vore tilbud matcher såvel brugernes behov og krav, men også sikrer de ernæringsmæssige optimale standarder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ at medvirke til at sikre ældre borgere i kommunen et kvalitativt ernæringsmæssigt godt og lækkert måltid mad forarbejdet af gode råvarer</li> <li>▪ at Madserviceenheden bliver mere synlige i debatten om kost og ernæring, samt det gode måltids betydning for borgerne</li> <li>▪ at vi får lagt grunden til et udviklingsarbejde, der kan sikre en tilpasning til kommende borgeres forventninger, ønsker og behov.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Interessenter i projektet</b> - institutioner/kommunal ledelse, medarbejdere, borgere etc.</p>	<p>Projektets interessenter er borgerne, ledelsesrepræsentanter fra produktionskøkkenerne, den centrale forvaltningsdel i Social og Sundhed, medarbejdere fra produktionskøkkenerne og fra plejen. Ligeledes kan nævnes, at repræsentanter for kommunes Ældreråd og Handicapråd vil være relevante samarbejdspartnere.</p> <p>Politiske interessenter er Social- og sundhedsudvalget.</p>
<p><b>10. Implementering</b> – hvilke overvejelser gøres der for at kunne implementere projektets løsningsforslag.</p>	<p>For at sikre, at projektets løsningsforslag bliver implementeret i praksis, er det vigtigt, at der skabes et helt konkret ejerskab til løsningsforslagene.</p> <p>Kommunikation og formidling er nøgleord i implementering af projektet. Et felt vi gerne vil arbejde målrettet med.</p>
<p><b>11. Opbakning i kommunen til at få løst problemstillingen ved brug af servicedesign</b> – beskriv fx overvejelser, tilkendegivelser herom.</p>	<p>Holstebro Kommune vil i vid udstrækning bakke op om at få problemstillingen løst ved brug af servicedesign.</p>
<p><b>12. Hvilke og hvor mange ressourcer (timer/penge) afsættes til deltagelse i projektet.</b></p>	<p>Der afsættes ca. 40- 60 timer / 30.000 kr. derudover i det omfang det er nødvendigt.</p>

Der henvises endvidere til Holstebro Kommunes sundhedspolitik på Holstebro Kommunes hjemmeside [www.holstebro.dk](http://www.holstebro.dk)

**NB.** Madservice tilbereder også skolemad – og nogle af de erfaringer der kan tilvejebringes i ovenstående forventes også at kunne anvendes i.f.t. branding af skolemaden.

Det udfyldte skema mailes senest **31. august 2007** til: Fuldmægtig Rikke Søndergaard, Servicestyrelsen, [rs@servicestyrelsen.dk](mailto:rs@servicestyrelsen.dk)

## Appendix 12

### PowerPoint presentation of The Good Kitchen, November 2007



**PROJEKT GLAD FOR MAD**  
- Optimering af Holstebro Kommunes madservice

page 1

### PROJEKT GLAD FOR MAD

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- Holstebro Kommune har vundet en konkurrence om at deltage i et demonstrations-projekt om service-design!
- Samarbejdspartnerne er:
  - A) **Erhvervs- og Byggestyrelsen**: Finansierer projektet mod at de må bruge det som et demonstrationsprojekt i forhold til kvalitets-reformen og til erhvervs-fremme af designerhvervet
  - B) **Idé og designfirmaet Hatch & Bloom A/S**: Har vundet projektet sammen med Holstebro Kommune. Firmaet har bl.a. erfaring med servicedesign både for offentlige og private virksomheder som Arla Foods og Danske Bank
- Projektet skal gennemføres i perioden **01.12.07 - 31.03.08**

page 2

## FORMÅL MED PROJEKTET ER...

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- A. at afdække de ældres behov, forventninger og krav til madservice
  - B. at løfte kvaliteten af Holstebro Kommunes madservice-ordninger
  - C. at tilbyde de nuværende og fremtidige ældre en endnu bedre service, inden for de eksisterende rammer
  - D. at øge de ældres generelle livskvalitet og sundhed
- Projektet skal fungere som forbillede for, hvordan kommuner gennem nye samarbejder og via servicedesign kan forbedre kvaliteten af de offentlige serviceydelser
  - **Service design er en ny disciplin**, hvor et designfirma anvender forskellige kreative metoder til at analysere og forbedre både materielle og ikke-materielle løsninger

page 3

## PROCESSEN MOD BEDRE MADSERVICE

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1. Analyse af nuværende og fremtidige ældres behov, forventninger og krav til madservice. **1. dec. - 15. jan.**
2. Udvikle idéer til forbedringer samt til nye løsninger og processer. Der afholdes bl.a. en fælles workshop mellem Holstebro Kommune og Hatch & Bloom. **15. jan. - 15. feb.**
3. Afteste og forbedre idéer, samt gennemføre vurderinger og beregninger af løsningernes kvalitetsmæssige og økonomiske betydning/gevinst. **15. feb. - 29. feb.**
4. Færdigudvikle de bedste løsninger og gennemføre implementeringen af mindst 1 ny løsning, som finansieres af Erhvervs- og Byggestyrelsen. **1. mar. - 22. mar.**

page 4

## UDGANGSPUNKTET ER DE ÆLDRE!



- Derfor starter Hatch & Bloom med en kvalitativ analyse, hvor de bl.a. observerer og interviewer en række ældre fra Holstebro Kommune i deres eget hjem - det er jo dem, det handler om!
- Derudover interviewer de kommunens personale og andre eksperter, for at få deres perspektiv og **input til forbedringer**

## Appendix 13

### Dichotomies in literature on public sector innovation - an overview

Dichotomy	References
Incremental vs. radical innovation	Albury (2005); Mulgan & Albury (2003); Bason (2010)
Open vs. closed innovation	Hippel (2005)
Economic value vs. public value	Moore (2005); Bason (2010)
Random vs. strategic innovation	Bason (2010); Albury (2005)
Science/technology-driven vs. people-centered innovation	Digmann et. al. (2008); Bason (2010)
Internally vs. externally initiated innovation	Digmann et. al. (2008)
Top-down vs. bottom-up innovation*	Mulgan & Albury (2003); Borins (2001)
* Externally: policy-level vs. organizational level. Internally: Top management vs. middle managers/front line personnel	