



CITY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES. VALENCIA 11/03/2020

Design for urban innovation

VALENCIA DECLARATION

We, participants at the DESIGNSCAPES POLICY FORUM meeting held in Valencia, Spain, in March 2020, with a view to contribute to a smarter, more sustainable and more economically and socially inclusive European Union, and aware that we live in a global and evolving world believe that design enabled innovation could face successfully many unsolved problems of modern Cities - related to global challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, migration, inequalities and segregation, aging population, democracy crisis etc.

The European Commission also recognizes design as a key discipline and activity that contributes ideas to the process of innovation. In this context the aim of this declaration is to encourage the uptake, enhancement and up scaling of Design Enabled Innovation by enterprises, start-ups and SMEs, public authorities and agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders all over the cities of Europe. The application of design thinking, and its tools and design methodologies, facilitate structured innovation in products, services and business models, organizational innovation and other intangible forms of innovation.

We can assert, then, that design is a catalyst for innovation, as reflected in the Montreal Declaration, a promoter of sustainability, a support for culture and value-adding element to technology, agent of change, contributor to resilience and risk management, and promoter of development.

And cities play a crucial role, acting as testbed environments for new solutions targeting global challenges, to be commercially exploited at a later stage, and/or being the cradles of emerging, radically innovative practices that disrupt existing markets and create new opportunities for growth and jobs. In fact, it is in the city that innovation is driven by problems that present themselves in the most societally relevant way.

We are, therefore, at the right time and the right place to propose a declaration that puts the focus on the social relevance of design and takes advantage of the aforementioned qualities to underpin design enabled innovation as an urban transformative tool of change.

Design should become a new common good

When we speak of design, we certainly have in mind its close relation with creative and collaborative problem solving, though not limited to the capacity of professional expert teams, despite the relevant role they play in supporting Design Enabled Innovation. Designers as professional and design as problem-solving tools ought to be filtered, incorporated and embedded in the different levels of social, political and economic life. We need to socialize design as an enabler of innovation.

Design should become a new Policy Competency

Creating the conditions for design (as well as innovation) to unleash their potentials is tightly connected with the parallel diffusion of a design and innovation prone mindset in policy makers and civil servants. This is only part of the broader issue of capacity building for the public sector of the future. In that sense, design is no longer to be simply considered as a (public but still fundamental) goal of innovation policy, but also as a resource to generate innovation.

European cities as launchpad for design enabled innovation.

It is true that we have not yet developed complete conceptual frameworks, nor do we have a clear and conclusive corpus of experiences, which is why European cities must launch themselves into the mission of becoming the world's largest field of experimentation of design-enabled innovation. Cities should facilitate the generation of innovation both as an endogenous process relating to local resources and the result of embedding innovations from other contexts. Cities must help share and propagate local innovation

skills and capacities within urban contexts not previously exposed to other innovation enabling conditions. Cities ought to facilitate the scaling, embedding and/or transferring of innovation.

Building design capabilities for all

We have to move from awareness of the need for design to processes to train all urban actors in the uses and practices of design methodologies. Design as a mindset should become more prominent in formal education (primary/secondary school) in all disciplines of university education (including STEM curricula) and long life learning, but to make sure that change occurring at 'niche' level is instigated at societal scale, European cities should procure more financial support to creatives and 'garage' innovators led by design. And more collaboration is needed between design and innovation intermediaries (fab labs, incubators, business associations, etc.) and other cultural and social ecosystems and of course, public authorities must have confidence in the potential of design for all.

Each proposal of design-enabled innovation has its own optimal dimension.

The challenges facing societies are urban in scale, but solutions can be found at different scales. A relevant part of the process of generating innovation through design is precisely to find the right scale of intervention. Design enabled innovation should experiment in the urban neighbourhood, where face to face relations keep alive, but also in the small town, still the prevailing profile in the EU urbanization model, and in the large sized city, to add to the technology push concept of smartness, and in the region, where large and small cities can

be made to work together and in the city twinnings, large with small, or advanced with lagging behind in terms of innovation or in city networks, also cutting across regional and country borders. Every insight has its scale.

From these approaches, We the signatories of the Valencia declaration propose an alliance of European cities whose mission is to promote the use of design as a lever for innovation, widening the awareness of the impacts of design, developing appropriate policy frameworks, strengthening local skills and capacity, undertaking strategic city missions. We want to make Design

Enabled Innovation more and more purpose driven: that is, give it a transformative meaning. The goal of this alliance is to work on capacity building of public and private actors, not only in terms of more and better appropriation of design methods and tools, but effective acquisition of that 'design thinking' mood and mindset being oft-cited in association with the best practice examples.

For this purpose, we took the motto of Valencia as the world capital of design in 2022: **Design for the senses, design for changes**

Valencia, 11th March 2020

