

Seminar “Designing fruitful cooperation for shaping the New European Bauhaus” 23-24/02/2022

Workshop 6 – Design as tool for social change Report

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Link to the Klaxoon board: <https://app.klaxoon.com/participate/board/DG6AWXQ>

I. Presentation of the subgroup’s theme

Our group’s theme is related to how design could become a real tool to improve everyone’s life quality. The concept of social **design** is really at the core of this topic. It is an approach to design that prioritises empathy, justice, equality and sustainability. It questions the purely commercial dimension of design.

With social design, the idea is to use Design as a tool to provide a lever for democratic participation and inclusion through the practice of co-design, characteristic of social design. This participatory and inclusive approach allows a more democratic access to design, by recognising the power of individuals and communities to act on their environment.

This topic is deeply connected with different European social challenges that are for instance the ageing of the population, scarcer means of production and resources, a social system that does not work, inequalities among countries, bad living and working conditions, climate change or pandemic.

II. Examples of how social innovation can work in practice

1. Foundation “Be together” (Byc razem) – Poland (Lubomira Trojan)

This initiative aims to reintegrate isolated, homeless or unemployed people that have been marginalized, within the society.

Along with designers, the foundation enabled those people to create a new brand called “*Well done*” (*Dobrze rzeczy*) without require from them any specific skills. Using social design tools, they have managed to produce various products such as toys, mug pads or cable holders. Today, the brand is sold all over the world.

Such initiative make people feel useful and valuable to society.

2. Terra di tutti – Italy (Fabio Ballerini)

The lab design for sustainability, which is part of the department of architecture of the University of Florence, has developed a social enterprise named *Terra di Tutti* to provide social and work inclusion.

This initiative promotes circular economy and social inclusion by producing intercultural crafts made by home-seekers and refugees. Along with them, 30 university students and some teachers and researchers are implicated in the project. There are different types of goods such as carpentry and serigraphy.

Factors of success has been various in this co-design project. Firstly, the enthusiasm of all the people involved in the project is essential. Then it is important to have a critical approach of the work. Finally, the decisive factor was that everyone from designer, refugees, social workers or students, has been put on the same level. Everyone had the opportunity to enhance and discover its skills by creating something innovative and new.

III. Vision of the world in 10 years from now regarding the theme. What forms can it take?

- **Promote diversity in design:** Everyone must feel legitimate to express themselves and to have an opinion regarding how design will structure their environment. In order to do so, it is essential to involve people and inhabitants in the future transformation of cities ;
- **Awareness by education:** Today’s children are tomorrow’s citizens. In order to have an educated, responsible, independent and critical population, democratic school must make sure to address real issues ;

- **Develop citizen consultation** : Consultation and empowerment should become mandatory in the process of transforming cities and countryside ;
- **Develop inclusiveness** : Focusing on more health and comfort-oriented public spaces should be a priority as well as tackling the need of people with fewer opportunities ;
- **Climate**: Develop a more Earth and human centre vision for the future and give up purely commercial perspective. Meet climate commitments such as zero emission and the 2030 agenda is also essential ;
- **Create a more open society** : Improve inclusion of migrants and refugees and create strong Mediterranean alliances for the economic, commit to social and cultural growth of all societies around the Mediterranean Sea ;
- **Enhance cooperation between countries and regions** : ensure the involvement as many local actors as possible ;
- **Democratizing access to Beauty** : quality design is not an option and should be accessible to as many people as possible.

IV. What are the obstacles to this vision to date? What need to be changed to make it possible?

- **Lobbies and corruption** ; continue with a political approach that is geopolitically centred and not enough human and nature centred, pursue capitalistic interests instead of Agenda 2030 ;
- **Lack of courage and open-mindedness** : Be able to step out our comfort zone and do not be afraid of the unknown as well as do not fear other people and other culture ;
- **Lack of information and comprehension for citizens** ;
- **“Don’t look up” syndrome** : We can’t continue to turn a blind eye on what is happening around us both in terms of environmental issues or humanitarian issues.

V. What would support this vision and make it happen?

- **Quality and open information for everyone** : it should promote a more active citizenship ;
- **Give financial value to natural/common resources** : such action should be helpful in order to take them into account and give them more weight in the eyes of the industry and policy makers ;
- **Pursue a common goal** : promote the fact of working in the same direction and not against each other, it also means to be coherent on our commercial choices and to be more resilient ;
- **Deconcentration of power** : redistribute more power to the local level and diversify the recruitment policy in cities administration ;

- **Bottom up approach** : get everyone to express themselves and act for a positive vision of society and not lock themselves into a vision of I am against, I do not agree and I do not offer an alternative ;
- **Coming back to basic human values** : by education and culture understood as tools for inclusion and good life for all.

VI. What are the axes of intervention or types of public actions and the most relevant synergies of actors to make those changes happen?

a. Local scale :

- Use of design tool to create more products and services based on local resources, crafts, traditions. **Actors involved** → Designers, local depositors, local officials, international partners to share their experiences ;
- Make inhabitants vote directly for some decisions/investments. **Actors involved** → Mayors and local politicians close to the citizens ;
- Multiply participative calls for initiatives and projects. **Actors involved** → Municipalities, local councils, inhabitants, users ;
- Support business, support institution (create new tools, new services and products) by using design thinking method. **Actors involved** → Business support institution, regional authorities and designers.

b. Inter-territorial / National scale :

- More informal education systems. **Actors involved** → HEI, schools, educators, officials ;
- Develop more European partnerships between European schools (primary, college, high school) around the subjects of transformation of cities countryside and territory. **Actors involved** → Ministries of education of European countries, local authorities, teachers, associations of parents of pupils ;
- Participation of civil society in decision-making processes. **Actors involved** → NGO, local, authorities, local community ;
- Exchanges of best practices. **Actors involved** → Associations, schools and universities, social enterprises and private companies ;
- Actions dedicated to combine accessibility with innovation and design (from small steps to bigger ones). **Actors involved** → Entrepreneurs, R&D, institutions, designers.

c. European / international scale :

- Leaders for democratic education ;
- Cities role in building local ecosystems ;

- Consultations and empowerment become a criterion for the allocation of European aid. **Actors involved** → different business organizations, HEIs, design centres ;
- Social innovation. **Actors involved** → Design centres, universities and research centres, 3rd sector, private companies, public institutions ;
- Private-public-third sector cooperation.