

IVA KOSTEŠIĆ

DESIGN FACTOR IN THE RENEWAL AND MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY

DIZAJN KAO ČIMBENIK OBNOVE I SUVREMENOG RAZVOJA GRADA



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The publication “Design Factor in the Renewal and Modern Development of the City” is a preliminary report of a group of researchers from the School of Design’s Section of Industrial Design at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. The research for this report was carried out within the umbrella project “Constitutive Elements of Architecture, Urbanism and Design” headed by the Faculty of Architecture during 2020, the year when two major earthquakes caused significant damage with human casualties in several towns and cities in the central region of Croatia, leaving behind a devastated nation and shattered landscape. Coupled with the global COVID-19 pandemic, these events had an unprecedented impact on the lives of citizens and their security in the recent past. With a mission to recover from the crisis caused by the earthquakes, various professionals in disciplines concerned with the material and immaterial aspects of the built environment quickly rose to the challenge – the renewal and reconstruction of the damaged urban and rural areas. The publication “Design Factor in the Renewal and Modern Development of the City” gives relevant insights into the matter from the viewpoint of design.

As noted in the introductory text of the publication: “Stay Home – Get Out” by Sanja Bencetic, which tackles the contradictory situation caused by the twofold COVID-earthquake crisis, the described challenge imposed questioning the state of preparedness of all structures of urban life for risk and crisis situations and the role of design in three distinct stages: preparedness in the case of a crisis, the reaction and protocol during the crisis, as well as recovery activities after the crisis. In doing so, the researchers set themselves a dual aim: the first, to detect and define the problems which need to be and can be resolved by design, and the second, to determine the potentials through which design can and should establish new values.

Since the framework for the research was determined in the context of a crisis situation and risk management, the second chapter “Modern Society and Risks – Sociological Aspect” authored by Anka Mišetić, provides an

overview of sociological theories that are concerned with risk as a structural phenomenon of post-industrial society, which is characterised by creating politics of fear and politics of prevention. The chapter then deals with risk and recovery from a crisis and/or catastrophe in a contemporary society, relating it to resilience, sustainability and community participation as factors that contribute to crisis prevention or a faster recovery rate in the aftermath of a catastrophe, natural or technological.

The next chapter gives a clear and summarised description of the used methods of research, including creating an archive of existing reference projects in the field of product design and relevant interdisciplinary projects. The information gathered from the archive was structured and categorized by area, theme and guidelines for further research and design projects. Additionally, a questioner was carried out in order to test students’ sensibility to the crisis caused by the earthquake, the results of which were used in the selection of students and their level of participation in further research and projects.

The bulk of the publication is devoted to reference projects in a chapter divided into several topics from ten contributing authors. Zlatko Kapetanović and Nika Pavlinek give an insight into “Examples from the History of Industrial Design”, concentrating on projects and discourse that focus on design as a means of raising the quality of life on the one hand, and the efforts in formulating the social role of design on the other, in both local and international context. Ivana Fabrio and Nina Baćun deal with “Contemporary and Current Examples” in design practice, which shift from the old and superficial notion of design as forgiving, and bring forth practices and projects that nurture socially responsible design which aims to improve the quality of life. The authors also highlight the importance of transdisciplinary approach and participative methods that are essential for establishing a sustainable society in which design focuses on matters of care in regards to community, life and the environment. This

is followed by “Examples in Inclusive Design” by Sanja Bencetic. The author provides key concepts from the field of inclusive design giving an in-depth overview and description of the users that make the focus of every inclusive design project – extreme and marginalized groups – which are most vulnerable in crisis situations. Through extensive research of existing practices, the author states that inclusive design has mostly failed in its aim to provide solutions for the most threatened groups in crisis situations, which in turn opens an opportunity to devise guidelines for future research and projects based on co-design, interdisciplinary activities, and methods from inclusive, social and speculative design. Andrea Hercog and Mladen Orešić supplement the publication with six projects designed by students from the School of Design, which is a testament to their interest and readiness to meaningfully react to the needs of the most vulnerable users. From here, the stage for design intervention is shifted to the urban environment where students were encouraged to document and analyse characteristic architectonic elements in Zagreb, the results of which were published by Robert Simetin. Ivana Knez contributes to the publication with a theme on temporary interventions as instruments for urban renewal, and as tools for empowering and connecting communities in their joint effort to recover from crisis events. The last text in this section written by Anka Mišetić brings students’ analyses of the found conditions and quality of the sociocultural environment of their choosing, which led to the defining of specific design activities for raising the quality of the analysed environment. The final two chapters conclude with concise research results and specific guidelines for further research.

The publication “Design Factor in the Renewal and Modern Development of the City” enriches our understanding of the role of design in tackling “wicked problems” prior to, during and in the aftermath of a crisis, and as such is a valuable source to both past and present practices and theories in regards to preparedness and reactions to crisis situations.

