



PROJECT DESIGN SILESIA AND ITS ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT IN POLISH POST-INDUSTRIAL'S REGION

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Abstract

The last years of economic and social development in Poland have revealed that design can be a powerful approach in regional innovation, especially when it comes to the contribution of the creative class in building a new identity for neglected places on the post-socialist' country map. However, it could not be achieved without the government support so it is important to formalize activities of leaders with the provisions of the political strategy. One of the most interesting regions, which are recently significantly changed in Poland under the influence of creative activities in the field of design is the Province of Silesia. Thus, it is worth raising the subject of regional development by good practices in design, carried with the government support.

Key words: Design, creativity, industrial region, Design Silesia, regional development.

1. Introduction

The contemporary definition of designers' role revealed that creative ideas can be transformed into new products, services and contribute significantly to improve the image of business and market efficiency. Numerous of studies show that good design enhances competitiveness and becomes - especially for small business - a chance for the reference market success. Especially now, when design is commonly identified with innovation, the participation of designers in creative development is said to be increasingly willing. Province of Silesia is one of the first regions in this part of Europe, which has created a unique project to facilitate a metamorphosis of Silesia, based on the idea that design is one of the best tools for long-term changes in quality of life. This project – called Design Silesia - was carried in 2010-2013 by the EU funds and based on cooperation between Voivodship Marshal Office, centre of research and documentation into material culture and design (Zamek Cieszyń) and the university environment (Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, Economic University in Katowice, Silesian University of Technology). Therefore in this article it comes to show how the collaboration of various regional institutions can contribute to the emergence of new quality both economic and social development through the tools used in the area of design.

There are three goals in the presented text. The first one is to clarify the idea of contemporary role of design as a tool to develop region on different levels. The second – is to show one of the most interesting postindustrial Voivodeship in Poland Province of Silesia and its strategy policy in design by implementation of Design Silesia Project. The last objective of the text is to present selected initiatives which have been put in place of Silesia to modify awareness of the role of the creative industries in the development and possible areas of cooperation showing concrete examples taken from the project Design Silesia.

2. Contemporary meaning of design

According to the authors of the report Needs Analysis And The Development Of Creative Industries (2009), one of the more important and more perceived occupational groups with the creative industry are designers. " The activities of the designers translates directly and easily measurable commercial success of manufacturers of many products and services. According to Bede (The Bureau of European Design Associations), in 2006 more than 447 thousand designers in Europe generates annual revenue of over 36 billion euros. Leader in terms of number of designers (over 185 thousand) and income from the creative industry (16 700 million) is the United Kingdom. According to estimates by Bede in Poland is about 6 thousand designers (of various specialties), and the turnover of the creative industry (57 million) are at a similar level as in Estonia (40 million) and Luxembourg (36 million) " (Need Analysis... 2009:5).

The term design is open to varied interpretations and it has got a range of definitions that have been offered and applied. Traditionally, design was considered an exception limited to luxury segments and sophisticated niche markets that could appreciate a product's aesthetic and artistic value. The products should have been stylish and aesthetic. Design is now spreading in different industries far beyond the luxury market and low-tech industries and rapidly redefining its nature and its role in the process of product innovation and in marketing practices. The traditional, narrow definition of design, as the artistic creation of luxury, stylish goods reserved for elite customers, is giving way, in the scientific and managerial literature, to a much broader definition which sees design as "a process of innovation that requires products to incorporate aesthetic value" (Lojacono 2002). In this perspective, design is becoming the synthetic expression of a range of managerial processes, including product innovation, communication, distribution channels, and renewed customer relations, that are innovating products by adding *communicative value*. Instead of being considered an appendix to the process of innovation (an ex-post fix), design is acquiring a central role in rethinking the product and building *valuable meanings* for customers (Bettiol et al: 3). Earlier definitions of the designer's work emphasized the broadcasting of an aesthetic quality for objects, whereas nowadays more and more definitions require the participation of users, enterprises whose involvement can affect the quality of the final result of the designer's work. Until recently, they were seen as

artists, designers form. Designers' contemporary work goes beyond such understanding of designing and they themselves can do much more for the surroundings than their predecessors. With the innovative and socially-conscious approach to designing (universal design, sustainable design) designers enable more efficient, innovative and user-oriented action. Their role is both in generating innovative solutions and building a dialogue with a recipient in a broader context. Well-designed services, public space or communication systems do not only influence the quality of surroundings but they also engage users in the process of ultimate defining needs and priorities. The value of the designer's work refers in equal measure to the fact that they create a unique design as well as ensure extra activities and services (from choosing a materials supplier, influencing the efficiency of production to proposing solutions as regards service design). Thus the role of a designer depends on the definition which we adopt for the purpose of determining the term design. It is also worth noting that for years design was identified with form and now 'its contemporary understanding seems to transcend any categorizations. Having crossed the traditional framework of industrial design, applied graphics, architecture and urbanism, design successively penetrates into other socio-cultural practices – even the ones whose otherness (or even contrariness) built its identity throughout the 20th century (...). By designing interaction design “transcends the form” – designers create thriving environments of communication, cooperation and interpersonal relations' (Skladanek 2009:14–15).

“Design is a vision Design is a process Design is a result” (auth. Michael Wolff). It is one out of the 50 different definitions of design offered by famous designers, business-people, politicians, that were published in the booklet printed by Design Council in 1995. Design is seen as one of the main routes through which ideas are turned into innovations. Is also the route to competitive success, especially in the world market. (DTI 2005:6-7). Systematically we can observe that definitions of designers' work put its essential goals in a broader context. “What will make a product stand out is the quality of the way it matches the purpose, skills and personality of the user, of the visual communication which goes with it, of the environment in which it is sold, and of the image of its maker. All of these are created by design.” (Bernsen 1987).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an increasing interest among designers in applying their skills to social issues. But this time the context of the social engagement is different than during the pioneering years of industrial design when the focus was on creating democratic products for people in the way of industrial production, mass consumption and an emerging welfare society. Today, socially engaged designers are more preoccupied with responding to the negative consequences of industrial production, mass consumption and the breakdown of welfare models. Some author states that ‘social actors, including designers, are urged to work on the major social, cultural, political, and economical instances brought about by globalization’. This new social engagement differs from previous reactions on industrial society (Fuller 1969, Papanek 1985) since the focus is less on products or technology (Burns et al. 2006) and more on ‘systems, services, organisations and policies’ (Emilson et al. 2011:24). As Nicola Morelli said, traditional disabling (and product-centered) approach offers very few opportunities to improve the living conditions of underserved populations. In the traditional industrial context, designers were working on gaps or deficiencies in social groups. When the result of the designer's work was a product, the efficacy of the solution depended on the product's lifespan. In the new context, designers should work on the customers' (residual or full) capabilities, and consider customers as a resource rather than a problem. In this sense, design also becomes a facilitating tool for suggesting to people ways of satisfying their own needs, thus providing solutions for a lifetime (Morelli 2007:18). Lauren Tan in her dissertation *Understanding the Different Roles of the Designer in Design for Social Good. A Study of Design Methodology in the DOTT 07* (2012) made a theoretical review of the fields where we can see the use of design as a tool for social innovation. “The emergent field is evident by the coalescent areas of design, or the different approaches designers take, when participating in design for social good. These areas include (Tan, 2012:3):

- Service Design or Design for Services
- Design for Social Innovation
- Social Design
- Co-design
- Transformation Design
- Design for Public Services
- Experience Based Design
- Creative Communities
- Design for Development
- Sustainable Design
- Design Activism
- Design Thinking
- Public Service Design”

One of the example, where the idea of design as a tool of social innovation appeared and where we can observe the profession redefinition of a designers' work in the context of social utility is the project Design Silesia. It was conducted in one of the Polish post-industrial region, province of Silesia in 2010 – 2013. This project not only contributed to the notice that design can be a tool of innovation, but it also improved and disenchanted the current image of the region, associated strongly for years with the industrial culture.

3. Design in a post-industrial landscape

3.1. Province of Silesia

One of the most interesting places on the Polish map where creative industries have become important in efforts to make a new image of the region, is the province of Silesia. Silesia Region is located in the southern part of Poland. For almost the last two centuries it has been the most industrialized area of the country. The variable political affiliation of

Upper Silesia, its cultural peripherality against other regions and the characteristic structure of employment caused this area dominated by worker and folk tradition. Being for centuries a great and important industrial basin of Prussia, later the German Reich, and finally Polish area was overdue culturally, with a weak number of elite education. To the second half of the nineteenth century the region represented mainly poor, sparsely populated village, situated away from major cultural centres. As a result of the rapid industrial development this area was mostly inhabited by people of the working class. Restoration of Poland's independence in 1918 changed a bit the social structure of the region. The population began to be formed by well-educated people who came from other regions in searching for employment. Immigrant intelligence were primarily civil servants and people with technical professions. The identity of Silesia in the field of economic and social development permanently tied the region with industry. On the eve of the political transformation of 1989. in the former province Katowice (now composed of the province Silesia) there were 520 state-owned industrial enterprises (10% of all plants of this type in the country), including 65 coal mines, 13 power plants and 19 steel mills. The region produced 97.6% of coal produced 48.7% of all Polish passenger cars, 56.6% of crude steel, rolled products 53.2% and 100% of the zinc and lead (Szczepański 2002:18). However, the political changes initiated in 1989-1990 highlighted the many shortcomings of this specialization that can be observed today in many areas of social, economic and cultural life. Among the most frequently mentioned negative phenomena for a particular attention deserve a domination over social production functions; destruction of physical space on a large-scale degradation of urban space; overload and failure of infrastructure, environmental degradation perpetuated; distortion of the social structure and professional one; enclaves of poverty and exclusion; rapid growth of unemployment, increased crime and the emigration of residents. Therefore defining development opportunities, the government of the province often refer to aspects that serve to "disenchant" the current (industrially backward) image, and stimulate economic development to make competitiveness region not only in the region or country, but also in United Europe. One of the tasks that are today an important part of the game about the attractiveness and competitiveness of territorial units is awareness that new image and development should include the participation of the creative class with a special role of designers. This is evidenced not only by the demands of the strategic policy of the region (including the relevant entries in the Innovation Development Strategy, or Strategy for Cultural Development in Silesia), but also by initiatives and projects oriented at development of Design. One of the most important is "Design Silesia II" - a design system of the Silesian Provincial Government under Sub-measure 8.2.2 Regional Innovation Strategies Human Capital, whose main objective is to bring entrepreneurs, governments and academic and scientific environment theme design and to encourage the implementation of innovation through design.

3.2. Design Silesia In Practice

Many examples show that the government can play an important role in enabling creative industries to support development on many different levels. Benefits of creativity and design are wider not only for the firm itself. Creativity and design activities are also important for marketing, company image and helping create brand loyalty. They can reduce production costs, for example, through the choice of materials for manufacturing and process design can raise the efficiency of production or consumption of a service, improving productivity. There may be an important role for the government in facilitating networks between creative services such as design and other sectors. Government also plays an important role in the cultural environment through its support for the organizations which were created to promote design (DTI 2005:10-11). One of the key elements in the discourse around the benefits such as programmes is increasing the level of activity within 'creative industries' and its influence on regional development in the way of innovation by design.

Province of Silesia is the first of Polish state which adopted a policy of regional development with a design role in Innovation Development Strategy in 2002, incorporating priority "to encourage the creation of new innovative products and companies" and the strategic objective of "promoting industrial design (Gołębiowska 2010:12) and the Strategy for the Development of Culture in Silesia in the years 2006-2020 (Sobaś 2010:7-9) with the postulate development of Design and increasing the value of aesthetic and functional public space. Silesia is also one of the first regions in this part of Europe, which has created a unique project to facilitate a metamorphosis of Silesia, based on the idea that design is one of the best tools for long-term changes in quality of life. This project – called Design Silesia - was carried in 2010-2013 by the EU funds and based on cooperation between Voivodship Marshal Office, centre of research and documentation into material culture and design (Zamek Cieszyn) and the university environment (Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, Economic University in Katowice, Silesian University of Technology).

The authors of project Design Silesia said, that the name immediately describes the fundamental aspects of its activity, because the main idea is to transform Silesia with good design. "Our region is being restructured and thus faces a huge challenge of converting the economy from heavy industry to new and innovative branches. One of them is design, understood not only as a graphic design, but also as a conscious design, whether it is in the scale of the urban space or everyday items or - less obvious but equally important - in the design of better services. At the same time the specificity of Silesia, the industrial character with its reflection in the urban landscape and mentality of the people, the local cult of work, rationality of solutions, centuries-old tradition of production, complex manufacturing processes influence the local, unique, high quality design. Not only do we transform Silesia with design, we also change design with the specificity of Silesia, design schools which operate here, entrepreneurs and designers." (<http://www.design-silesia.pl/en/misja>). Design Silesia also strives to promote good design in Silesia. One of the goals of this project was to show that good design can give the people good, not only at home but also where they work, study and relax. "We teach elected officials how to create a friendly office and how to improve their efforts to make the use of these institutions or service more enjoyable for the residents. We show how to create friendly and functional public spaces with functional objects that are part of an efficient puzzle of a cleverly managed city or village. We educate the Silesian entrepreneurs, we convince them that well designed products and services can effectively improve the competitiveness of their businesses. Finally, we promote the Silesian Voivodeship itself. To this end we organize numerous exhibitions of local

design both in Poland and abroad, we sponsor publications on regional design, we organize international conferences which draw design specialists from around the world, we also create online and multimedia learning platforms promoting Silesian design” (<http://www.design-silesia.pl/en/misja>). Project Design Silesia also played a very important role in the development of social network in the designers' environment. “The organizers create an interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience related to design, free of any affiliation - political, social, economic or with narrowly defined specializations. They help designers to make their first steps in the market, contact them with entrepreneurs and producers, contact public officials with designers thus creating a mutually beneficial relationship - local governments learn new ways to improve their operations, the designers often get an opportunity to implement their projects and have a real impact on the development of our cities and towns, often for the first time in their careers. The last but not least is to make some changes in local governments conscious about design - realize the necessity to cooperate with designers and interdisciplinary teams to increase the competitiveness of municipalities, as well as improve the quality of life of their residents” (<http://www.design-silesia.pl/en/misja>).

Activities, which were carried out under the Design Silesia project were broadly defined. For just three years of this project, leaders of Design Silesia were managed to organize workshops, issued several important publications on the theory and research in the field of design and carried out many professional courses of design (for example service design course- conducted by world specialists). Project Design Silesia contributed also to strengthen cooperation between young designers and entrepreneurs and to improve communication between local administration and designers. It is also worth showing how it looked in practice. Here are a few examples of implementation the idea of design in province of Silesia (<http://www.design-silesia.pl/en/co-robimy>):

- **Design in the field!** It was a series of design workshops during which an interdisciplinary team of participants and experts relocates to a municipality for a week, and together with the residents they find solutions to an indicated issue of concern.
- **Design Icons of Silesia.** A research project, which resulted in a publication presenting the trends in 20th century Silesian design and the first Polish virtual gallery of 3D models dedicated to our regional design. A team was selected through a competitive process, which will carry out a historical analysis of design after 1900 in Silesia. The author of the research conducted on behalf of Design Silesia was Irma Kozina, PhD. The results of several months of work have become a publication, on the basis of which a virtual gallery was prepared (fig.1)



Fig. 1. Design Icons of Silesia (<http://www.design-silesia.pl/en/strona/19-design-icons-of-silesia>)

- **Design ... at your service! in business.** Three project teams and three companies have worked together for four months to jointly design the best possible service for their customers. The purpose of this project was to promote modern methods of designing services (based on service design methodologies) among businesses and young designers from the Silesian region. Together they have developed the best solutions for every specific company, ready to implement. This program helped to broaden the businesses' scope of operations through cooperation with designers and helped young Silesian designers to gain experience.
- **Design ... at your service! in public institutions.** It was the first project of its kind in Poland, we're incorporating thinking in terms of design in the public sector in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of public services. Proposed resolutions are varied: the introduction of free competition in the market of public services, increasing productivity and the introduction of online services. To be successful, each method must respect the principles of good design. Design and design thinking help to rethink the implemented policies, the functioning of institutions and the way of delivering public services.
- **Model Silesia** - the first program of its kind in the region. The process of product development is monitored in cooperation with young designers and entrepreneurs who so far have no experience with design. A study of Silesian entrepreneurs in 2011 showed a high design potential dormant in Silesia. 33% of entrepreneurs in Silesia plan to implement a new product or service in the near future, and 43% are thinking about it. 62% of designers working in the profession have a positive opinion of design development in the region (Rojek-Adamek et al.:2010).

- **Mobile Design Container** - mobile exhibition organized in two containers specially redesigned to serve as an exhibition hall. The best designed Polish products can be seen in the containers, they provide examples of successful cooperation between the business community and a group of talented designers.
- **Service Design Course** – one of the first practical course in region which learn how to use design' methodology to development of public and private sector using service design. Working with examples of specific problems related to service design, creating innovative solutions and experiences in both the real and virtual worlds. Taking into account social, technological and economic conditions in the design of services, studying the context of services.

4. Conclusions

Silesian region is not only the industrial province, but also region with a strong institutional platform for art and design. Although the landscape is still painted by chimneys smelters and mines, more often - woven into a completely new image of the region – Silesia is becoming a platform for development associated with new vision of design. The rich industrial heritage in this case often means an asset to the development of innovative and creative solutions. Certainly one of the key factors in the development of the region will create convenient and favourable conditions to build a creative environment, but no less important is the emphasis of this orientation on promoting good, creative solutions and multidimensional cooperation between entrepreneurs and local governments with designers. The actions undertaken in a natural way should become a magnet not only for a creative individual, but also investors, whose activities are focused increasingly on the potential of knowledge (high-tech, bio -tech) and not so far - only the natural resources of the region. Undoubtedly not only designers will determine the formation of a new image of the region, however, is already clear that their role seems to be priceless in giving the place a unique character. What is more, their actions and creations draw in a visible manner to identity for the region, systematically breaking its industrial inheritance with good design and strong need for innovative solutions, at the same time maintaining the unique features of the Silesian province. It is worth noting that all these activities need an institutional support. If we have more projects which combine environment of designers, scientists, entrepreneurs and local authorities, the changes in the sphere of social innovation would be easier to conduct. Therefore, the role of Design Silesia project turns out to be so multi-dimensional and invaluable for development possibilities in Polish regions, with the participation of creative capital as a main core of building new identity.

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