

**Citizen centered design**

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## ***Un progettare che mette al centro il cittadino***

### ***Citizen centered design***

*L'architettura odierna deve proiettare in vista di futuri rapidamente modificabili, in un modo da mantenere al centro il Cittadino. Ossia l'architettura deve riguardare il significato del progetto. Le attuali sfide sociali premono per un nuovo paradigma nel fare città che combina strategie catabatiche di governo pubblico con innovazioni sociali anabatiche per raggiungere progetti significativi. La sfida principale è quella di perseguire un nuovo atteggiamento collaborativo, un approccio partecipativo e avere strutture capaci di supportare questo tessuto sociale. Progetto partecipativo e politiche di transizione sono orientate al futuro, si rivolgono sia al pubblico che alle istituzioni. Solo da una comprensione delle persone nei loro contesti e nelle loro dinamiche si può progettare per ambienti urbani sostenibili e abitabili, corrispondenti alla scala umana.*

*Today architecture has to design for rapidly changing futures, in a citizen-centered way. That is, architecture needs to embrace meaningful design. Societal challenges ask for a new paradigm in city-making, which combines top-down public management with bottom-up social innovation to reach meaningful design. The biggest challenge is indeed to embrace a new collaborative attitude, a participatory approach, and to have the proper infrastructure that supports this social fabric. Participatory design and transition management are future-oriented, address people and institutions.*

*Only through understanding people in context and the corresponding dynamics, one is able to design for liveable and sustainable urban environments, embracing the human scale. LB*



**Ingrid Mulder**

Ingrid Mulder is Associate Professor of Design Techniques, Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, TU Delft. Since 2007 she chairs the research program Meaningful Design in the Connected City, which connects her research in both Delft and Rotterdam. Her background is in Policy and Organization Sciences (MA, University of Tilburg) and Behavioral Sciences (PhD, University of Twente). Ever since she has been involved in the interplay between top-down policy and planning and bottom-up participatory innovation. As an expert for the European Commission mainly in the context of Smart Cities, she advocates a sociable smart city perspective, as practiced in Rotterdam.

Parole chiave: **Progettazione partecipata; Città di transizione; Politiche top-down; Iniziative bottom-up; Cittadinanza;**

Keywords: **Participatory design; Transition city; Top-down management; Bottom-up management; Citizenship.**



What is the most pressing challenge that architecture is asked to resolve today?

The most pressing challenge is to design for unpredictable and rapidly changing futures, in a citizen-centered way. Architecture and urban design face many societal and technological challenges related to urbanization. It is obvious that meeting these challenges asks for a deep socio-ecological transition. It implies changes in urban development and governmental structures, but also changes in our personal lifestyles, that directly impact our daily lives. In order to drive such social changes, empowerment is crucial; without willingness and personal commitment of citizens, these challenges cannot be met. Hence, citizens are at the heart of our cities, they therefore need to be

at the heart of change as well. Differently put, architecture needs to embrace meaningful design. It is clear that architecture does not end with the completion of a building, park or square. It concerns the interpretation that people give to it and how they make use of the space. A city is not a city without the imprint of an identity: people make the city.

On top of that, the contemporary cityscape is increasingly laced with an omnipresent smart city infrastructure. There is no doubt the digital age is affecting our life, public and private, personal and collective. Even though, the lack of social cohesion is challenging contemporary cities. Spheres of

social interaction affecting identity and sense of belonging are not disappearing; though different. New social aggregations come into being differentiating local, global, physical, digital, offline, and online communities. Urban resilience is the answer behind global movements such as climate change adaptation or the sharing economy, creating new ways to build stronger cities and neighbourhoods. The question is how urban resilience is supported by local policies as well as how local civic communities are putting urban resilience in practice by new forms of collective action?



With respect to the design of the contemporary city; what is the role of architecture in managing urban phenomena?

Given the increasing networked nature of contemporary cities, the role of architecture is changing as well; moving towards a facilitating participatory governance of urban dynamics and transitions. The 'making of the city' is no longer the sole concern of urban planners and architect. No longer do their methodologies, expertise, and theories suffice to address the increasing complexity cities face. That is why designers of all sorts, IT specialists, urban anthropologists, philosophers, HCI researchers, artists and sociologists are increasingly teaming up in coalitions that up to a few years ago were unthinkable (Brynskov et al., 2014). Societal challenges ask for a new paradigm

in city-making, which combines top-down public management with bottom up social innovation (e.g., Mulder, 2014). Not only are new strategies, ideas, and ways of organization needed to cope with societal challenges, but also co-creative partnerships demonstrating a sustainable relationship to make a transforming society happen. It is not about who drives, but finding a mutual drive (Mulder, 2014). The biggest challenge is to embrace a new collaborative attitude, a participatory approach, and to have a proper infrastructure that supports this social fabric. This new city-making process is not only about bringing various disciplines together that addresses urban developments, but

foremost to establish a collaborative effort of defining a new way of working between professional designers, academics, policy makers and citizens. Differently put, this shift from 'city management' to 'participatory city-making' asks for different roles.

There are clear boundaries between classical design and architecture, in particularly regarding the use of prototypes in the design process. Also the kinds of prototypes differ largely. Where industrial design has its track record on iterations and working prototypes, in architecture prototypes are usually non-working prototypes. Where architecture, industrial design and interaction design used to be distinct disciplines, trans-disciplinary approaches of [societal] challenges are emerging. I'm not keen in stressing the boundaries between architecture and design. Instead, I would explore the increasingly overlapping areas between design and architecture. Interestingly, participatory design and

transition management have many things in common; both disciplines are future-oriented, address people and institutions, and increasingly deal with uncertainty, fuzziness, complexity, and cultural issues. Moreover, participatory design and transition management negotiate the needs of different stakeholders, aiming at developing more complete and integral viewpoints. These disciplines however, act on a different [urban] scale. What if we use these prototypes to encourage participatory city-making. Prototypes can be anything, as long as they enable the different city makers to collaboratively explore alternatives and to articulate their different viewpoints. Contemporary city-making asks

Architecture and design have established an exchange that is both operational and perceptive; buildings are conceived as objects and objects are conceived by those who design buildings. Between architecture and design, is it possible to define boundaries or intersections?



to go beyond disciplines, leveraging spatial, technical, and social disciplines through a trans-disciplinary approach, anticipating the unpredictable and rapidly changing futures and dealing with societal challenging. In this the role of the objects (prototypes) would move from the object of design (elements of the hard city, such as buildings) towards facilitating values-oriented trans-disciplinary and participatory city-making. The object of design is, consequently not the main focus anymore, the collaborative framing through participatory prototyping of what [object] to design has all eyes focused upon to develop more complete and integral viewpoints enabling designing for resilience.

#### 1. Biography:

Brynskov, M., Carvajal Bermúdez, J.C., Fernandez, M., Korsgaard, H., Mulder, I., Piskorek, K., Rekow, L., & de Waal, M. (2014). *Urban Interaction Design: Towards city-making*. Amsterdam: Floss Manuals.

Mulder, I. (2014). *Sociable Smart Cities: Rethinking Our Future through Co-creative Partnerships*. Distributed, Ambient, and Pervasive Interactions (pp. 566-574): Springer.

Sanders, L. & Stappers, P.J. (2014). From designing to co-designing to collective dreaming: three slices in time. *Interactions*, 21(6), pp. 24-33.

Resilient solutions only work when they fit and arise from the everyday settings people live in. My first advice to new students is to go out, visit and study the actual context you like to design for. First, students learn to take a human-centred design perspective in small-scale experiments. Only through understanding people in context and the corresponding dynamics, one is able to design for liveable and sustainable urban environments, embracing the human scale.

As said before, empowerment is crucial to address the societal challenges city face. Without willingness and personal commitment of citizens, social change cannot be met. The citizen's need should

therefore taken at the heart of the city making process, and future city-makers need to engage other stakeholders and beneficiaries throughout the city making process in co-creative practices.

This is in keeping with the emerging practices where designers increasingly explore what to design and not only how to design it. The design field is moving from 'designing for the user' via 'designing with the user' towards 'designing by the user'. Embracing complexity rather than reducing complexity and heterogeneity of end-users of design is key in co-design processes in the future. With participatory design, end-users have influence and control of the

When giving advice to students, what is the most valuable tool that an architecture or design student ought to acquire during their studies?



design of artefacts that suits their goals and activities at best (Sanders & Stappers, 2014). The proposed values-oriented trans-disciplinary and participatory city-making clearly fits Sanders and Stappers' vision of the design field in 2044, which includes design for transformation as an emerging design discipline.<sup>1</sup>