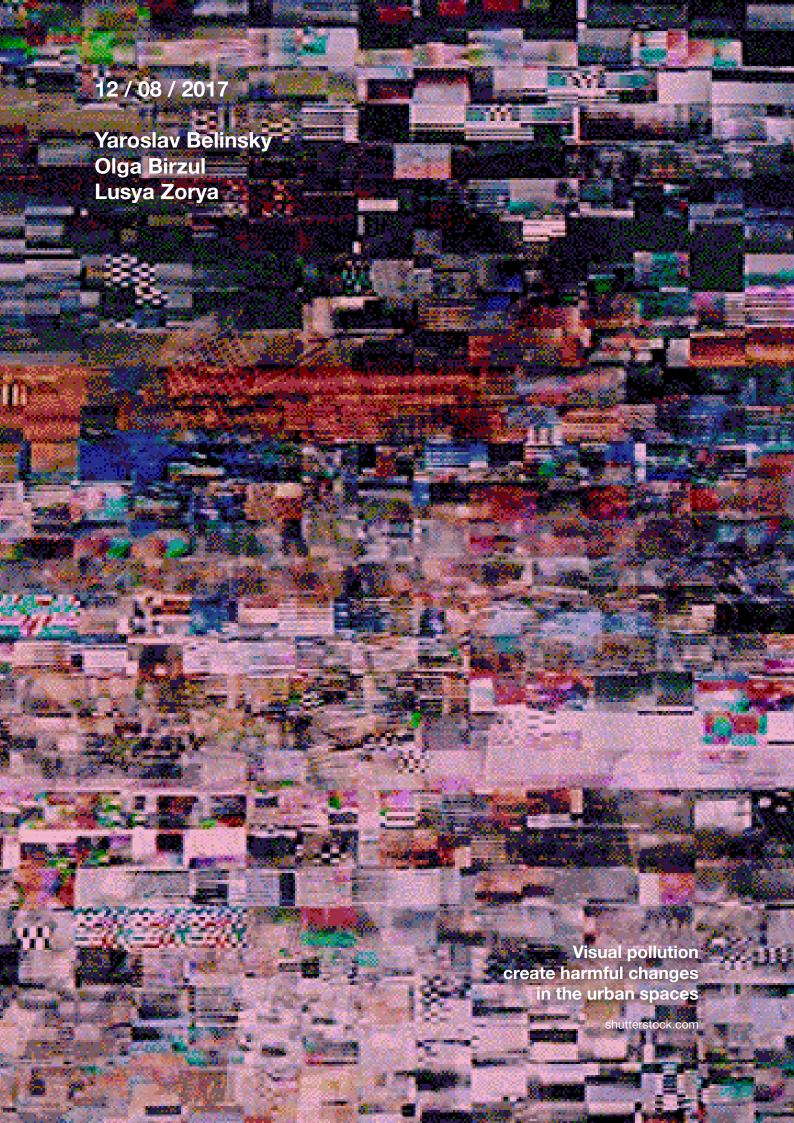# DESIGN CODES as an INSTRUMENT of CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION in URBAN AREAS

A policy brief for Culture & Creativity
EU-Eastern Partnership Programme

№16

12 / 08 / 2017

Yaroslav Belinsky
Olga Birzul
Lusya Zorya

Visual pollution
create harmful changes
in the urban spaces

Design Codes
as an instrument of cultural transformation in urban areas

1 / Summary

A Design Code is a comprehensive approach to visual solutions and arrangement and formation of the aesthetics of a city's appearance, which also addresses the problem of accessibility and ease of use of the city and its infrastructure. The application of design codes is becoming a widespread practice in cities around the world, but in Ukraine this practice is still underdeveloped at all levels of implementation and use. This brief aims to offer recommendations on the introduction, implementation and use of design codes in Ukrainian cities.

2 / Introduction

A design code consists of clear rules (municipal guidelines) that form a comfortable and visually pleasant environment on the streets. A city's design code organises the following elements of urban space:

Public space (squares, pavements, public transport stops, parking spaces);

Navigation (elements of street, road/transport and cycling infrastructure);

Street planning (outdoor advertising, information signs and street lighting);

Temporary structures (summer cafés, toilets, kiosks);

Small architectural forms (fountains, street furniture, art objects);

Landscaping elements (landscape design).

The visual organisation and aesthetics of the cityscape come in tandem with the challenge of accessibility and convenience of use of the city and its infrastructure. Moreover, the design code must be a comprehensive approach to creating a comfortable space for life, taking into account the principle of inclusion in cities and towns in accordance with their cultural, historical and geographical characteristics. For example, in September 2006, the mayor of Sao Paolo implemented the Clean City Law, which declared illegal any form of outdoor advertising, including billboards, advertising on transport and store fronts. Over the course of three months, municipal workers dismantled approximately 100 billboards a day. Five years later, a survey showed that 70 % of residents regards the Clean City Law to be useful. This also had an impact on business, since companies were forced to find other ways of promoting products and brands on the street. In addition, the Ministry of Culture of Brazil

Clean City Law,
Sao Paulo, 2006

launched the Cultural Points programme, which supports grassroots cultural initiatives, from establishing a library in a private garage to an individual initiative to create a museum of favelas (1). *

In the course of preparing for the brief, examples of cities such as Gothenburg, Abu Dhabi, Orlando, Washington, Sao Paolo, Moscow and Krakow were also studied and analysed.

In the course of preparing for the brief, examples of cities such as Gothenburg (Sweden), Mölndal (Sweden), Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), Orlando (USA), Washington (USA), Sao Paolo (Brasil), Moscow (Russian Federation) and Krakow were also studied and analysed.

This brief aims to address the following categories of people:

Residents of cities who want to improve the comfort and visual culture of their city;

Representatives of local councils who are interested in creating a positive image of their city;

Private entrepreneurs (restaurateurs, owners of shops and local businesses, etc.), travel companies, organizers of mass events, for whom an increase in the flow of customers is important;

3 / Current Situation

There is already public demand for a design code in Ukrainian cities. An example is an initiative by the designers of Agents of Change, who got together to develop a reference system for Kyiv. To date, they have implemented a project together with the Kyiv Underground System and the Kyiv Funicular. Their latest project involves testing street signage and address plates for Kyiv's residents (2). *

Today, there are several projects to create and implement a design code for public spaces in Ukraine. Teams of architects, urbanists, designers and activists have already worked on them in cities like Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Odessa, and Uzhhorod (3). *

However, the outdated bureaucratic system appears incapable of reacting promptly and effectively to address current challenges. For example, in 2016, the Contact Centre for Kyiv City (3) * received 178 applications in the category "dismantling of advertising structures and signage", of which 90 requests were carried out, 83 were not carried out, while 5 applications are still being processed.

In April 2017, Kyiv City Council adopted a new "Procedure for putting up signage in Kyiv City". The new rules aim to improve the cityscape of the capital, and, first and foremost, to preserve its historical centre. Now the document contains clear requirements regarding the appearance of signage, which are available in a special handbook (4). * However, some of them are subject to different interpretations, and the document does not apply concepts of sustainable development or strategic vision, since it is limited to instructions on street signage, not taking into account other advertising carriers.

4 / Options

Developing a design code for a city offers many advantages and positive consequences in the long run. Below is a list of recommendations for successful implementation of a design code in Ukrainian cities. They can be implemented individually or together, sequentially or simultaneously:

1) The "Legislative" Way
The introduction of a design code through legislation: In this case, the development, introduction and implementation of the design code by each individual city would be mandatory in accordance with a law passed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. This option involves engaging the Ministry of Justice and other ministries to bring into line laws (GOST and others) with other norms and standards.

The advantages of this option include compulsory implementation in accordance with adopted norms. The disadvantages may include a protracted process and non-compliance of the law with the means available in the state budget.

2) The "Recommendation" Way
This option involves implementing the design code through comprehensive recommendations on urban space planning. Such an approach takes the path of organic development of the adoption of the idea of a design code by society in general, and by the agents implementing the design codes specifically. Guided by the rules of the design code or not is up to each individual structure, and it would only have a positive effect in combination with the promotion of the idea of how important design codes are and an incentive system that would be financially beneficial for private business and public enterprises. The disadvantages may include free interpretation of the recommendations.

3) The "No Changes" Way
The development of Ukrainian cities without design codes means moving on with today's trends, further deterioration of living conditions in cities and likely negative consequences in the medium and long terms, both for communities

DELETE!
Art project by
Christoph Steinbrener
& Rainer Dempf

Neubaugasse, Wien / 6-20 June 2005

and cities in general. The outflow of qualified personnel to more attractive cities (or countries) will have direct negative consequences on the economic, social and cultural spheres of a city. With such a choice, instead of the positive multiplier effect (5) *, the "broken windows" phenomenon (6) * will spread. The growth of discomfort, dissatisfaction with the authorities and the system of city administration, not capable of effectively solving problems and creating favourable conditions, will lead to aggravating conflicts between local communities and government structures. Cities that can provide high living standards will become centres for the talented and enlightened segments of the population, who in conditions of the growing trends of distance work and mobility between cities and countries strive for quality living. Cities without functioning design code programmes would not be able to compete in a globalised world with those cities that do implement them.

5 / Recommendations

Recommended Steps and Actions:

- Carry out in-depth social research of the problems and needs of cities with the City Administration responsible for implementation and subsequent use in developing the design code;

- Development and adoption of an action plan (roadmap) by the relevant authorised bodies (city council) for the implementation of Creation and Implementation of the City Design Code;

- Create working groups with the relevant authorised structures, which will include representatives of civil society, private business, experts on urbanism, architecture and design, and state bodies, enterprises and owners, who will implement the design code in the future;

- Conduct a campaign promoting the idea of a design code for the public and involved agents of implementation of the design code;

- Conduct a campaign promoting the adoption of the design code for representatives of state enterprises in cities (development and implementation of incentive and bonus schemes for compliance in new projects with the standards set by the design code);

- Develop and implement a system of incentives for private entrepreneurs for adopting elements of the proposed design code (ratings, PR opportunities, tax breaks for meeting the requirements of the code).

*(1) [Pontos de cultura](#)

*(2) [Agents of Change](#)

*Multidisciplinary projects that relate to the sphere of influence of Design Codes

Podolyanochka (informal association of a local community of Facebook)
The community of the residents of Podil (a district in the city of Kyiv) conducts online and live discussions and tries to find solutions to the district's problems. Popular topics include illegal construction that violates legal standards and the comprehensive plan (the "monster" building on Nyzhniy Val Street) or violates approved plans (Poshtova Ploshcha), illegal advertising (the Clean Pillar campaign), among others.

[Kyiv Cyclists' Association](#)
This is an expert centre and an association of activists who work to transform Kyiv into a convenient and safe city for cycling. The organisation's mission is a convenient and safe capital city in which everyone has the possibility to ride a bike.

[Nebesna Sotnya Square](#)
The project is dedicated to the creation of civil society in Ukraine through the development of culture and public spaces.

*(3) Links to the design codes of different cities in Ukraine

[Lviv](#)

[Ivano-Frankivsk](#)

[Uzhhorod](#)
http://rada-uzhgorod.gov.ua/web/uploads/old_docs/rada/pravula_vstanov_vuvisok.pdf

[Odessa](#)

*(4) [The manual for putting up signage in Kyiv City](#)

*(5) The Multiplier Effect: According to Michael LaFond, from the Institute for Creative Sustainability, for the development of a city, it is much more profitable to invest in quality public spaces. In this case, the so-called "multiplier effect" operates, when for each euro invested in the public space, 8 euros of

personal investment are made by citizens to improve the appearance of their housing. In other words, when a beautiful park appears, most people living nearby would want to repaint the exterior walls of their houses, care for the plants around them, etc., so that they appear nice against the backdrop of the park. This is a universal mechanism of human behaviour, which has already been observed repeatedly during experiments with public spaces.

* **The "multiplier" term** was introduced in economics theory in 1931 by the English economist R. Kahn. He discovered that in times of crisis or unemployment, public spending on any parcel of public works leads to an employment "multiplier" effect. The new parcel of works, generating the initial employment, acts as the impetus for corresponding expenditure in other related areas, provoking secondary, tertiary employment, and so on. Thus, initial spending is "multiplied" in a several-fold increase in employment. According to the theories of J. Keynes, the multiplier is a numerical coefficient that shows the dependence of changes in profit on changes in investment. The multiplier effect in a market economy means that an increase in investments leads to an increase in national income, which grows at significantly larger rates than the initial growth in investments.

(6) * **The Broken windows theory** is a criminology theory of norm-setting, namely the effects of disorder and vandalism on additional crime and anti-social behaviour in cities. For example, a broken window leads to the decline of the environment in which this negative act occurred – increase in cases of vandalism, more squalor, a worsening criminal situation. This academic theory was put forward by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling in 1982.

More on the topic of the brief

**Strategy for Reforming Outdoor Advertising
(Kyiv City State Administration)**

Back in June 2016, at a meeting of the permanent commission of the Kyiv City Council on Transport, Communication and Advertising, elected officials examined the presentation of the Strategy for Reforming Outdoor Advertising in Kyiv. According to the document, the territory of the city was to be divided into five format zones, with separate modes for putting up outdoor advertising in each. In the "ground zero" format zone, it was proposed that all forms of outdoor advertising be prohibited and in the last one to regulate them in accordance with clear rules (size and place of installation). At the same time, it was discussed that the first "ground zero" zone should begin at Institutska Street, as the place honouring the Revolution of Dignity.

Handbook for Urban Space Planning

In 2015, the handbook on the urban space planning of Kyiv created by the Institute of Urban Civil Design was presented for public debate and further development.
https://www.facebook.com/pg/dmakmda/photos/?tab=album&album_id=421309271365556

An attempt to renew the transport model of the city

In 2015, transportation reforms were launched in Kyiv. The Ukrainian Association of Intelligent Transport Systems was created. The transport model of the city was put in operation. The Department for Transport Infrastructure of Kyiv City State Administration developed new public transport routes in unison with the World Bank.

Actions and initiatives in support of convenient urban space

In August 2016, activists of urban social movements in Kyiv organised an art protest on Bessarabska Ploshcha to draw attention to the lack of pedestrian crossings.

https://hmarochos.kiev.ua/2016/08/18/na-bessarabskiy-ploshhi-aktivisti-proveli-aktsiyu-zebra-krashhe-nizh-vinok/

Architects create visualisations of what the streets of Kyiv could look like if they were European pedestrian zones.

https://hmarochos.kiev.ua/2016/09/29/pishohidniy-kiyiv-mriyi-5-vulits-v-tsentri-yaki-varto-perekriti-dlya-ruhu-avtivok/

Note

The policy briefs are the result of capacity building work undertaken by the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme in 2016-2017 with 240 Programme Associates, who had completed a series of eight workshops in business management for mid-career cultural operators. The purpose of these briefs is to help them additionally understand the role of professionals in providing concise and neutral policy advice in the area of their competence. The task was to identify problems with in the sector, provide potential models, options and solutions, support critical thinking, evidence-based policy analysis and the formulation of recommendations. The ideas were developed by the Associates themselves.

The report is developed with the assistance of the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme. The content of this report does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the publication lies entirely with the author.