DRS 2018

Design Research
Society 2018
Catalyst

University of Limerick
25th−28th June 2018

Journey Towards an Irish Design Strategy

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In February 2017, the Irish Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, launched the consultation paper towards a National Design Strategy 'Ireland – The Design Island' produced by the Design and Craft Council of Ireland. At the launch, the Minister, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., stated that the consultation paper contained "a list of issues that need to be examined, from quick wins to long-term strategic goals" for developing Ireland's design capacity. This political commitment to design is a significant milestone on the journey towards an Irish Design Strategy. A number of other significant steps have already taken place including the Year of Irish Design 2015 and the 2016 Policy Framework for Design in Irish Enterprises. Based on 14 interviews with a range of stakeholders across the Design Ecosystem, the authors have mapped the significant milestones in the process of developing policy actions for design in Ireland. Mapping the journey towards an Irish Design Strategy might provide insight for other researchers, policy-makers and stakeholders seeking to influence design policy.

Design Policy; Design Ecosystem; Irish Design; Innovation Policy;

1. Introduction

In the last few years a number of key milestones have taken place on the journey towards a National Design Strategy for Ireland instigated by the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI). Notably, design has been integrated into the annual Action Plan for Jobs, DJEI invested €5 million in the Year of Irish Design 2015, it commissioned three research studies on the value of design, Enterprise Ireland piloted new design support programmes and in 2016, DJEI published its 'Policy Framework for Design in Irish Enterprises' identifying six key action areas to enhance the Irish Design Ecosystem. The relatively rapid progression of these activities raises a number of research propositions: In the case of Ireland, what were the preconditions for developing design policy actions? How were the policy actions for design developed? To what extent were they implemented? What, if any, has been the impact and how might this feed into future design strategy development? Based on 14 interviews with a range of stakeholders across the Design Ecosystem, the authors have mapped the significant milestones in the process of developing policy actions for

design in an attempt to identify the critical success factors for influencing policy. Design is being recognised as a driver of user-centred innovation across Europe (Moultrie & Livesey, 2009, p. 4; Raulik-Murphy, Cawood & Lewis, 2010, p.53; European Commission, 2010, p.3, 2013, p.4; Whicher, 2017, p.117). Among European Union Member States, between 2012 and the summer of 2017, design policies, strategies or action plans have been launched by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia and the European Commission (Whicher, 2017, p.117). Mapping the journey towards an Irish Design Strategy might provide insight for other researchers, policy-makers and stakeholders seeking to influence design policy. Based on the case of Ireland, the critical success factors within the process of developing the design policy could be considered a rationale instigated by business champions, evidence to justify government action for design and continued momentum sustained by Design and Craft Council of Ireland.

2. Design Policy: Theory versus Practice

Although a growing number of governments across Europe, including the European Commission (2010, p.3, 2013, p.4;), are recognising design as a factor for innovation, there is no blueprint for developing, implementing and evaluating design policy. In fact, there is a lack of academic evidence and knowledge on design policy, design strategy and design action plans (Choi, 2009, p.4; Raulik-Murphy et al. 2010, p. 53; Cruickshank, 2010, p. 23; Whicher & Walters, 2017, p. 116). The domain of design policy would appear to be one where practice is developing more rapidly than theory. The design policies for Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland and Latvia adopted a broad definition of design that can be applied to developing user-friendly products, services in both the private and public sectors and for addressing societal challenges and policy processes (Whicher, 2017, p. 118). Design being recognised on these various levels is broadly consistent with the definition of design proposed by Buchanan (1998, p. 64):

1. Designing symbols, visuals, logos;
2. Designing physical objects, artefacts, products;
3. Designing interactions, experiences, processes, services;
4. Designing systems, strategy.

The notion that design can be enacted at various levels has been reinforced and reinterpreted by practitioners including through the Danish Design Centre's Design Maturity Ladder, which categorises use of design according to four levels: 1) no design, 2) design as styling, 3) design as process, and 4) design as strategy (Ramlau & Melander, 2004, p. 49). The Design Ladder has become a reference point around the world for communicating how design has greater returns depending on how strategically it is used. This has even been echoed by the European Commission in its Design Action Plan:

> *Design is increasingly recognised as a key discipline and activity to bring ideas to the market, transforming them into user-friendly and appealing products or services. Though still often associated solely with aesthetics, the application of design is much broader. (European Commission, 2013, p.4)*

Design can be a complicated notion to convey to government (Whicher, 2017, p. 123). Nesta (2017) has developed an infographic building on Buchanan's definition to communicate design's various roles to government:
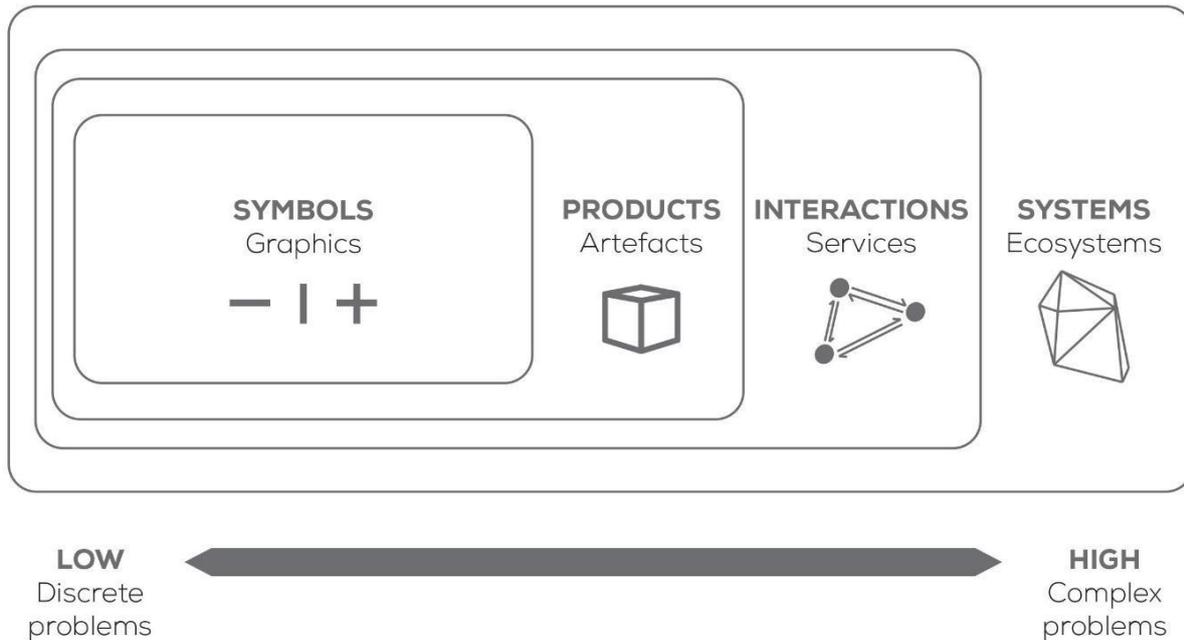
Figure 1 What do we mean by design? source: Nesta, 2017

Having discussed how design is attracting the attention of government and how design might be communicated to government, it is necessary to turn to exploring definitions of design policy. According to Raulik-Murphy:

> *Design policies are government strategies that aim to develop national design resources and to encourage their effective use in the country. A common theme with these strategies is creating an environment in which design and creativity can flourish. (2010, p. 54)*

For the EU project consortium 'Design in European Policies' (DeEP, 2015, p.16) design policy is defined as 'a set of rules, activities, and processes to support design through the reinforcement of design capabilities at all levels of the policy cycle'. Research on design policy is emergent; however, already it has become commonly accepted to draw on the established field of innovation policy to justify design policy. A number of researchers contend that in the same way that innovation policy is based on insight into the innovation system, or more recently innovation ecosystem, design policy should be based on insights from the design system or ecosystem (Love, 2007, p. 3; Moultrie & Livesey, 2009, p. 16; Raulik-Murphy et al., 2010, p. 57; Sun, 2010, p. 74; Swann, 2010, p. 4; Hobday, Boddington & Grantham, 2012, p. 277; DeEP., 2015, p. 11; DJEI, 2016, p. 4; Whicher, 2016, p. 67; Whicher and Walters, 2017, p. 9). To a greater or lesser extent the design policies for Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland and Latvia are all based on an assessment of their design ecosystem. The Finnish Ministry of Economy developed a design strategy with 29 actions in which:

> *A well-functioning design ecosystem plays a crucial role in the implementation of the programme vision. The term refers to a complex system where factors affecting the utilisation of design – education, research, design promotion organisations, companies offering design services, public sector incentives and demand for design from businesses and the public sector – operate in close interaction and strengthen one another. (TEM, 2013, pp. 20-21)*

Similarly, for the Latvian Ministry of Culture as stated in the Latvian Design Strategy (2017, p. 8), the Design Ecosystem model 'focuses on the analysis of the local situation and design processes' and that the roles within the design ecosystem 'may overlap and change'. A design ecosystem is 'a theoretical construct used by academics and policy-makers to examine the interplay between actors and initiatives in a network and how this can inform targeted policy action for design' (Whicher,

2016, p. 82). And thus, design policy can be considered 'government intervention aimed at stimulating the supply of and demand for design to tackle failures in the way that actors and components interact in the ecosystem' (Whicher, 2016, p.82). A model for conceptualising a Design Ecosystem (Whicher, 2016 - see figure 2) has been developed and tested through a combination of research and knowledge transfer initiatives and also been embraced by the Latvian Ministry of Culture as a framework for developing the Latvian Design Strategy. The model hinges on the premise that all components of the Design Ecosystem are interdependent and that there should be a balance between supply and demand in order to create a dynamic ecosystem.
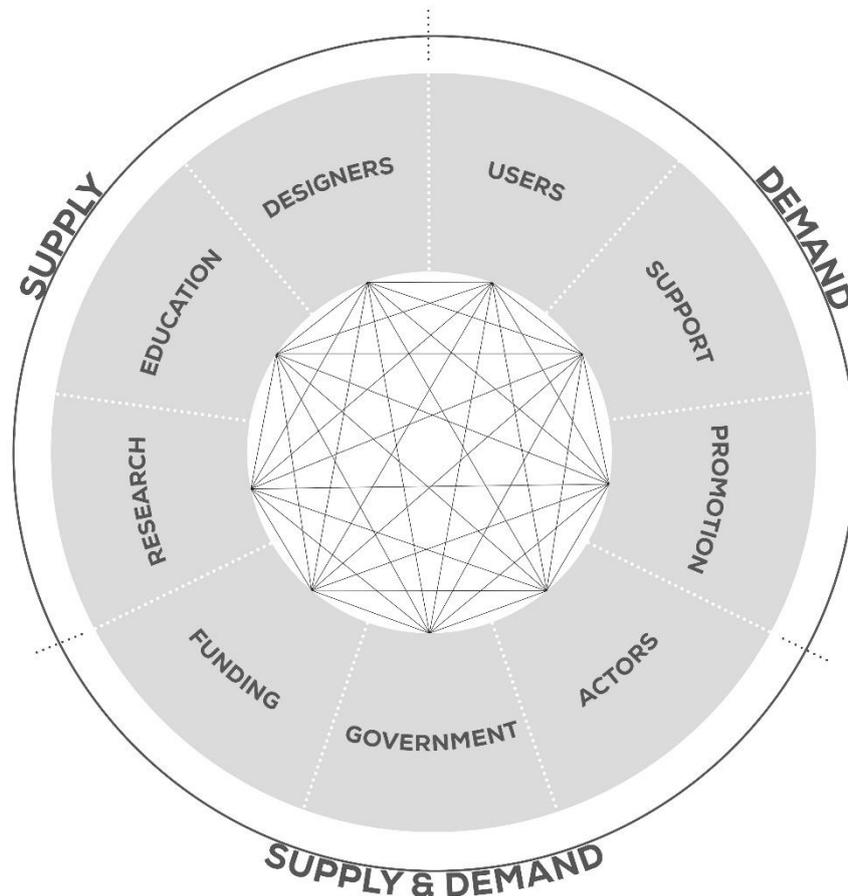

Figure 2 Design Ecosystem. Source: Whicher, 2016

3. Method

The Design Ecosystem model has been taken as an overarching framework for identifying and selecting participants for examining the process of developing design policy actions for Ireland. A series of 14 participants were interviewed representing a cross-section of the Irish Design Ecosystem (see table 1 for the breakdown of interviewees per category of the Design Ecosystem). Each of the interviewees played an active role in the process of developing the Policy Framework for Design in Irish Enterprises and as such were well placed to inform the mapping of the design policy process for Ireland. For example, DJEI established an Advisory Group to guide the development of the Policy Framework for Design and these people were involved in the research, among others. At least one interviewee was selected to represent each of the nine segments of the Design Ecosystem model. The 'government' segment of the Design Ecosystem was covered by three policy-makers from DJEI with direct responsible for the policy formulation process including chairing the Advisory Group, commissioning new research and drafting the Policy Framework for Design. The components 'design support' and 'funding' were accounted for by the two representatives on the Advisory Group from Enterprise Ireland, the national innovation agency. The elements 'design promotion' and 'actors'

were covered by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland as well as the Year of Irish Design 2015 (ID2015). The segment 'design users' included interviews with senior managers in a small, a medium and a multi-national company. These companies were selected by Enterprise Ireland as 'innovation leaders' and case studies of Irish firms successfully using design as part of an evidence gathering process. The components 'design education' and 'research' involved academics from Dublin Institute of Technology and the National College of Art and Design both consultants in the policy process. Finally, the representing section 'designers' were two freelance designers who contributed to the policy process by performing research and insights activities for DJEI.

Table 1 Interviewee categories..

Design Ecosystem element	Stakeholder category					
	Government	Support & Funding	Promotion & Actors	Education & Research	Designers	Users
Organisation name	Department for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation (DJEI)	Enterprise Ireland	Design & Craft Council of Ireland	Dublin Institute of Technology & National College of Art & Design	Freelance designers	A small, a medium & a multi-national enterprise
Number of interviewees	3	2	2	2	2	3
Total						**14**

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Dublin between July 2015 and July 2017 lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The questions were semi-structured, allowing flexibility for the interviewee, and focused broadly on the preconditions for developing design policy actions, how the policy actions for design developed, to what extent they were implemented, whether they had impact and what the critical success factors might have been in the case of Ireland for getting design on the policy agenda. Based on the interview data, a number of iterations of the Map of the Irish Design Policy Process were produced and feedback was provided by telephone by two key stakeholders. These stakeholders were selected to validate the mapping exercise based on their institutional commitment to advancing the design policy agenda in Ireland. As new design policy developments emerge the map will be updated. Mapping the process by which the policy actions for design were developed by the Irish Government is the first step to performing a comparison with the design policy development processes in other European countries to potentially move towards codifying a model for a Design Policy Development Process.

4. Findings

This section plots the route (see figure 3) along which DJEI progressed resulting in the Policy Framework for Design in Irish Enterprises. These are the key milestones and initiatives on the journey towards a National Design Strategy which is still in development.
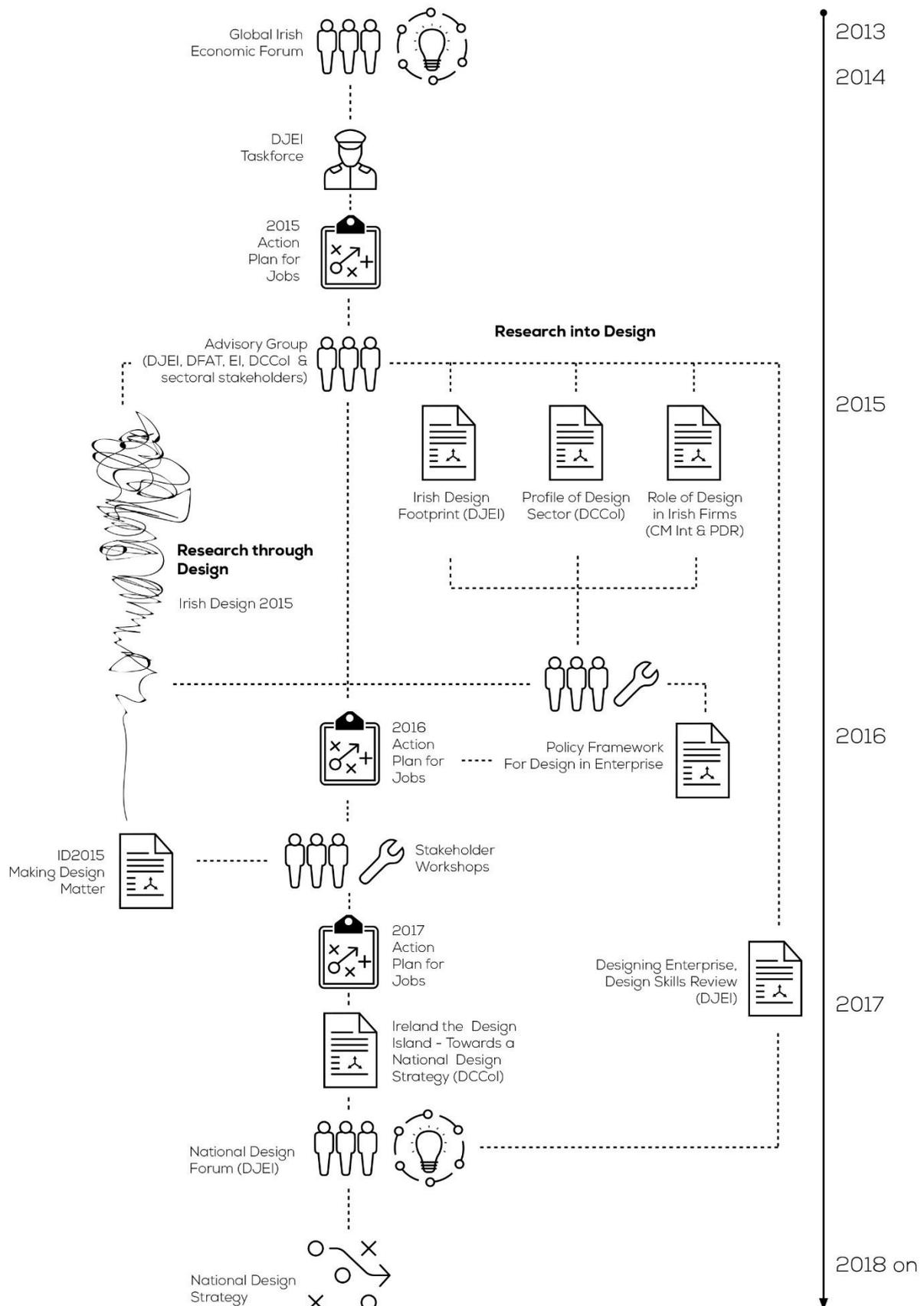
Global Irish
Economic Forum

DJEI
Taskforce

2015
Action
Plan for
Jobs

Advisory Group
(DJEI, DFAT, EI, DCCoI &
sectoral stakeholders)

Research into Design

Irish Design
Footprint (DJEI)

Profile of Design
Sector (DCCoI)

Role of Design
in Irish Firms
(CM Int & PDR)

**Research through
Design**

Irish Design 2015

2016
Action
Plan for
Jobs

Policy Framework
For Design in Enterprise

ID2015
Making Design
Matter

Stakeholder
Workshops

2017
Action
Plan for
Jobs

Designing Enterprise,
Design Skills Review
(DJEI)

Ireland the Design
Island – Towards a
National Design
Strategy (DCCoI)

National Design
Forum (DJEI)

National Design
Strategy

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018 on

Figure 3: Journey Towards an Irish Design Strategy

4.1 Planning the Route to an Irish Design Strategy

Arguably, the journey towards a national design strategy started in the 1960s, with the so-called Scandinavian report - Design in Ireland (Scandinavian Design Group in Ireland, 1961); the first significant move towards understanding design in a national context. This seminal report provided a catalyst for change in the Irish State's approach to design. The Report was commissioned by Córas Tráchtála, the Irish Export Board and the Scandinavian Design Group was formed expressly for the purpose of writing the report. As well as stimulating debate, and laying the foundation for significant changes in design education in Ireland, the Scandinavian Report also provided a clear rationale for establishing the state-funded Kilkenny Design Workshops responsible for building capacity design among Irish industry and wider society. Since then, as described by one academic interviewee, discussions revolving around design policy have been "cyclic" re-surfacing "approximately every decade". However, all interviewees concurred that the developments gathered significant momentum after 2013 when at the Global Irish Economic Forum business and cultural leaders called for design to be recognised as a national approach to innovation. This was a "turning point" giving "fresh impetus" to the design policy process in Ireland and therefore has been included as the first milestone. One interviewee described the annual forum as a "crowdsourcing ideas for policy". Consequently, a task force was assembled in DJEI to examine the role of design in innovation. As a result, in the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 DJEI outlined six "specific and ambitious targets":

- Create 1,800 new jobs in design by 2019
- Establish 200 design-led business start-ups in 2015
- Generate €10 million in design exports in 2015
- Facilitate 300 company visits on international design-based trade missions
- Implement two Design 'Accelerators' to fast track new design companies by 2016
- Engage with 3 million at home and abroad (DJEI, 2015)

Working towards these targets, DJEI designated 2015 the Year of Irish Design (ID2015) with the President of Ireland as its patron. DJEI invested €5 million in ID2015, which was also matched to the same value by industry sponsors. This represented the "largest single government investment in design ever" in Ireland. What makes ID2015 and the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 atypical of design initiatives in Europe is, according to DJEI, the significant "resources mobilised" and, according to one designer interviewed, the "stringent metrics." To monitor ID2015 and the targets, DJEI set-up an expert Steering Group was with 8 representatives from national bodies for innovation and design such as Enterprise Ireland and the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, among others. The role of the Steering Group was, according to the Action Plan for Jobs, to examine the impact of design with a view to devising a 'strategy to ensure longer-term development of the design sector and business investment in design as part of the legacy of ID2015' (DJEI, 2015, p. 133).

4.2 Signposting the Way

Guided by the Steering Group, DJEI embarked on an evidence gathering mission including commissioning three research studies on 1) the understanding of design in Irish firms, 2) the composition of the design sector and 3) the contribution of design to the economy. For DJEI, the purpose of the three studies - Design in Irish Firms, Profile of the Design Sector, Irish Design Footprint – was to "establish three crucial data benchmarks". The study on the 'Role of Design in Irish Firms' (Henderson & Whicher, 2015) involved a literature review of design-driven innovation, case studies of 12 Irish firms successfully using design and a survey among n216 innovative Irish firms key account managed by Enterprise Ireland. The survey findings (see figure 3) revealed that among the cohort, 97% believe that design is key for customer satisfaction, 90% of respondents perceived design as a driver of innovation and 86% considered that design is key to Ireland's business reputation. According to a design manager in a multi-national financial firm: "Ten years ago

design was seen as production and styling and now the concept of design thinking has become a strategic part of business to add more value and invest in KPIs."

Figure 4 Design in Irish Enterprises. Source: DJEI, 2017

The study 'Irish Design Footprint: Economic Value and Characteristics' was performed by DJEI to create estimates of the economic value of design across the entire Irish economy based on data from industry codes extracted from the business register collected by the Central Statistics Office. Broadly, the study replicated the 'Design Economy' study commissioned by the UK Design Council. The definition of design was proposed by DJEI and encompassed specialised design (including graphic, industrial, interior, fashion), architecture, digital, design engineering, creative directors and craft. The findings revealed that design has a significant influence on the Irish economy. At around €38 billion in 2013, exports from the design sectors account for more than 21% of total exports (mostly due to the strength of the digital sector). Employment in design roles has increased by 6.7% between 2011 and 2014 to 48,000 people; this constitutes 2.5% of total employment in Ireland. The study on the 'Profile of Business in the Traditional Design Sectors' (Kennedy, 2016) was based on desk research and interviews with sector representatives. The research revealed a strong regional spread of design agencies. At the end of 2016, the study found 3,868 design businesses in Ireland with the greatest concentration in the Dublin region (1,329 design businesses) and the second largest concentration in Cork (408 design businesses). Nevertheless, the study also suggested fragmentation in the sector due to small business sizes and relatively short lifespan of design businesses. There was a strong start-up culture with two thirds of design businesses being less than ten years old and the majority being small and micro businesses. For DJEI, to advance the design policy agenda the "most convincing arguments were economic". The three studies are demonstrative of the type of evidence required by government to intervene in the Design Ecosystem.

4.3 Taking the First Steps on the Journey

The economic data on design was vital for advancing the design policy agenda; however, according to one policy-maker, "there was both a formal and an informal approach to policy development influenced by our involved in ID2015". One academic described this as "immersive policy-making" while another compared the traditional linear process against a "spaghetti" process. This was in effect research into design through design. DJEI embarked on a significant "data and insights synthesising" process to define the policy options. Consequently, to capitalise on ID2015, in January 2016, the Policy Framework for Design was launched focused on six areas:

- Increased use of design-driven innovation in the wider enterprise base
- Building scale in the design sector
- A step-up in the engineering design sector
- Supporting entrepreneurship in the design sectors
- Developing skills and talent in design
- More females in design roles. (DJEI, 2017)

From the perspective of one of the designers, whereas the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 had been "prescriptive" the Policy Framework for Design "did not go as far". The former allocated a specific empirical target, assigned a timeframe and a delivery body; whereas the latter was a vision for design not linked to specific funding mechanisms, targets or implementation plan. A similar sentiment was expressed by a representative from a medium-sized company in the advanced engineering sector: "The design policy is important for progressing the dialogue in government. However, more needs to be done because in businesses the accountants may not see the value of design they would only see the price tag." Nevertheless, the design policy was fervently supported by the then Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash T.D. (Design for Europe, 2016), it was his vision to:

> engage with Ministers, Departments and agencies, and others in the Government sector to better embed design in various aspects of national policy – education, culture, tourism, foreign diplomacy – but most importantly enterprise and innovation, as a force for job creation, international competitiveness and foreign investment.

Winning political commitment to design is a significant step as the ebbs and flows of the political tides affect agenda setting. Not only did the Government develop a dedicated design policy but design was also integrated into the enterprise policy, innovation policy and Action Plan for Jobs 2016 and 2017. This has been an immersive process for many of the stakeholders involved including Enterprise Ireland: "We are moving from design with a small 'd' to Design with a big 'D'. That is moving from passive support to actively supporting companies to use Design." This immersive element of the policy process is intangible but nevertheless a vital and perhaps underestimated part of policy-making.

4.4 Taking Stock of the Journey So Far

The Year of Irish Design (ID2015) was a programme of national and international events and initiatives "on a scale never before attempted in Ireland" according to the Design and Craft Council of Ireland, the main implementation body. Aiming for the establishment of a "sustainable Irish Design Ecosystem" meant the development, implementation and evaluation of an array of programme components:

- Design Support - providing design thinking and training for industry and the public sector.
- Design Sector - raising the capabilities of Irish designers and establishing the critical network, infrastructure, information and research required to support the development and culture of the Irish design sector.
- Design Promotion - creating a greater appreciation and demand for design.

- Design Research - commercialising research through design-led innovation and new intellectual property creation.
- Design Education - providing design thinking and training for pupils, students and lifelong learners.
- Design Policy - providing the contextual framework, critical to decision making in the development and promotion of design through policies and strategies.

The focus was both broad through a large-scale showcasing of Irish design around the world in Embassies, exhibitions and tradeshows; as well as at home, where, for example, the Competitive Start Fund, run by Enterprise Ireland, provided €50,000 to seven start-ups. According to Enterprise Ireland, the Minister has "commissioned a mapping of all of the innovation programmes […] to identify where design can be integrated".

Some design policies or action plans in Europe have come under criticism for being retrospective not forward-facing documents (Whicher, 2017). For example, the EU Design Action Plan could be considered a stock-taking of design actions occurring between 2012 and 2017, even though the document was published in 2013. The EU Action Plan did not leverage any additional funding for design actions, although it should be noted that between 2012 and 2017 the EU allocated €25 million for design initiatives (BEDA, 2017). What makes the case of Ireland unique is that by setting "stringent metrics" in the Action Plan for Jobs 2015, the impact of ID2015 could be evaluated in order to assess whether additional actions could be justified in future years to drive Irish competitiveness. The Design and Craft Council of Ireland (DCCoI) performed an evaluation of the activities and impact of ID2015 according to the targets set in the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 (see table 2). Not only did ID2015 achieve or exceed all its targets, in interview DCCoI reported that "the return on investment in the initiative was over tenfold".

Table 2 Impact evaluation from ID2015. Source: Interview with DCCoI and also in Milton et al., 2017.

Target in the Action Plan for Jobs 2015	Impact from ID2015 by January 2016
1,800 new jobs in design created by 2019.	4,000 new jobs in design created.
200 design-led business start-ups established in 2015.	370 new design businesses registered in Ireland.
€10 million in design exports generated in 2015.	€24.1 million in design-related export sales.
€10 million generated in PR value	€22.1 million of PR value generated.
300 company visits on international design-based trade missions in 2015.	476 Irish companies showcased internationally.
2 Design 'Accelerators' implemented to fast track new design companies by 2016.	2 design support programmes implemented.
3 million at home and abroad engaged in ID2015 activities.	28.5 million people engaged at home and abroad in 670 projects including 100 internationally.

By demonstrating the ID2015 exceeded the targets established in the Design Action Plan 2015 there was political impetus to continue the successful trajectory. As such, part of the legacy of the year has been the development of a National Design Innovation Centre and the drafting of the consultation paper towards a National Design Strategy 'Ireland – The Design Island' by DCCoI. Speaking at the launch of the paper in January 2017, Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. (DCCoI, 2017) announced that:

> *It is important that we build on the momentum and achievements of ID2015 in order to develop opportunities for growth, especially in relation to exports. I am very pleased to see that a wide range of education and industry representatives have been involved in this consultation. The resulting document contains a list of issues that need to be examined, from quick wins to long-term strategic goals. This will now inform my department's plans for developing Ireland's design capability and for encouraging*

*design thinking across all sectors. Design will be a specific component of the Action Plan
for Jobs process in 2017, both at national and regional levels.*

Some of the more progressive proposals in the consultation paper included expanding Ireland's
design skills base, from primary level education upwards, increasing the use of design-driven
innovation in Irish businesses in key growth sectors, building capacity for design in public bodies and
encouraging the use of design in public procurement (DCCoI, 2017), among others. The Minister also
announced the establishment of the National Design Forum which would comprise of
representatives from key sectoral stakeholders, and be chaired by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise
and Innovation. This in effect constitutes the next stage on the journey towards a national design
strategy for Ireland.

5. Discussion

Mapping the process by which the policy actions for design were developed by the Irish Government
is the first step to performing a comparison with the design policy development processes in other
European countries to potentially codify a model for a Design Policy Development Process. Mapping
the milestones on the journey so far to towards a national design strategy is only part of the
approach, it is important to analyse those milestones to identify the critical success factors that led
to the significant decisions including ID2015, the Policy Framework for Design and the continued
support in the form of the development of a National Design Innovation Centre and consultation
paper. Among others, three factors were consistency cited by interviews as critical for the
development of the design policy and beyond. The critical success factors were considered a
rationale instigated by business champions, evidence to justify government action for design and
continued momentum sustained by Design and Craft Council of Ireland. Although attempts had been
made in the past to ignite interest in and create critical mass for a design policy, it was only when
business and cultural leaders at the Global Irish Economic Forum in 2013 championed design that
the process really started in earnest. According to an interview with a senior academic, none of the
previous activities had the "political clout that the collective influence of certain high profile Irish
business leaders are able to exert on government". This sentiment was echoed by other
interviewees:

> *The annual Global Economic Forum feeds into all elements of government. It's like
> crowdsourcing ideas for policy from cultural and business leaders.*

What might be concluded from the case in Ireland is that in order to get design on the innovation
policy agenda, it is necessary to have champions and ideally high-profile advocates from industry.

However, the agenda-setting by the business and cultural leaders is not sufficient for informing
policy. Policy should be evidence-based and if research did not demonstrate the link between design
and innovation and competitiveness there may not have been a Policy Framework for Design.
Interviewees, including notably the three DJEI policy-makers, all identified evidence as a critical
factor for advancing the design policy debate. Evidence played a crucial role twice during the process
the findings from the three research studies commissioned by DJEI as well as the results of the
evaluation by DCCoI of ID2015. In mid-2015, DJEI commissioned three research studies on the
understanding of design in Irish firms, the composition of the design sector and the contribution of
design to the economy. For DJEI, the purpose of the three studies - Design in Irish Firms, Profile of
the Design Sector, Irish Design Footprint – was to "establish three crucial data benchmarks". The
studies revealed that design is perceived as a competitive advantage by innovative Irish firms and
that design makes a substantial contribution to the Irish economy (predominantly through the digital
sector). Based on survey responses among a cohort of n216 companies key account managed by
Enterprise Ireland 97% consider design as key to increased customer satisfaction and 94% consider
design effect for developing goods and services (Henderson and Whicher, 2015). Similarly, the Irish
Design Footprint research based on industry codes revealed that exports from the design-related
sectors account for more than 21% of total exports and that employment in design roles has

increased by 6.7% in 3 years and constitutes 2.5% of total employment in Ireland (DJEI, 2016). The research on the Profile of the Design Sector revealed a strong regional spread but also a number of weaknesses in the sector such as fragmentation, small business sizes and relatively short lifespan of design businesses. For DJEI, to advance the design policy agenda the "the evidence from the research supported the need for a policy framework." The three studies are demonstrative of the type of evidence required by government to intervene in the Design Ecosystem.

Although there are a number of design policies, action plans and strategies across Europe the impact evaluations, if performed, have not been made public. The evaluation of ID2015 against the original targets was a vital part of the evidence based. When framed within the Action Plan for Jobs 2015, the list of quantitative targets appears very ambitions, particularly the measures such as '1,800 new jobs in design created by 2019', '200 design-led business start-ups established in 2015' and '€10 million generated in PR value'. However it is testament to the scale and reach of ID2015 that all targets were met or exceeded. In fact, by January 2016, according to DCCoI '4,000 new jobs had been created in design'. ID2015 had achieved more than double its targets in design-related export sales (€24.1 million) and the same for the PR value generated (€22.1 million) (Milton, Hennessy & Donnelly, 2017). Allocating such clearly defined targets is unusual for a design policy and as such, it is perhaps a slightly missed opportunity that a new set of targets was not developed as part of the Policy Framework for Design. Therefore, the lesson in the Irish case is to develop a small number of empirical metrics with timeframes and allocated to specific delivery bodies in order to then evaluate whether the design policy has been successful and had impact. Of course, there are wider more systemic impacts beyond the empirical but ultimately policy-makers are looking for metrics such as job creation and economic contribution. Such data will provide an on-going justification for government intervention for design.

As previously stated, efforts towards a national design strategy have been "cyclic" and according to one interviewee the "real challenge is to sustain momentum" after the intense year-long campaign. For to DJEI, Enterprise Ireland and DCCoI the continued support for design is due to the ongoing visibility and engagement efforts of DCCoI. According to DCCoI, "ID2015 was a catalyst for other activities like Enterprise Ireland taking more of lead on the design agenda." Indeed, Enterprise Ireland recognised the need to "bring our own organisation on the design journey". Similar sentiments were echoed by DJEI: "It has been a learning curve for DJEI and we have started to use design thinking in our policy work." In essence, it is not only the tangible results of ID2015 that have had an effect but the immersive experience exposing decision-makers to design processes that they would not usually have been involved with. This is in effect policy for design through design. The Design and Craft Council of Ireland (DCCoI) has been able to capitalise on the success of the year and set a number of ambitious activities for the coming years including establishing a National Design Innovation Centre. DCCoI has been mandated by DJEI to lead on the consultation process towards a national design strategy: "Now we want to perform a more in-depth mapping of the Design Ecosystem in Ireland." Clearly there are multiple factors at work in advancing the design policy agenda but the critical points appear to be business leaders setting the agenda, evidence driving policy development and sustained advocacy by a national design body.

6. Conclusion

The comprehensive programme of events and capacity building activities for ID2015 played an instrumental role in positioning design at the heart of Ireland's creative economy and in growing Ireland's reputation abroad as a home for innovative design products and services. The reaction to the work of Irish designers at key international design weeks, architectural biennales and fashion weeks highlighted the success of ID2015 in promoting the breadth of Ireland's design talent on the world stage. Minister Nash (Design for Europe, 2016), when reflecting upon the year stated that

> *ID2015 confirms that design creativity is alive and well in Ireland both at the individual and the business level. But it also tells us that investing in our design capability and*

performance will yield new export sales, create quality jobs and boost Ireland's international creative brand. To do so, Government will work with the DCCoI and the design sector to bring design into the heart of enterprise policy and to lose its status as the Cinderella of Ireland's innovation strategy and action plans. We need to build on the legacy of ID2015 and these actions will maintain the momentum created by the year of Irish Design. I believe there is huge potential to grow both employment and exports in businesses that embrace design as a core function of their enterprise. We also have the opportunity to further cement Ireland's reputation as a source of quality design.

The Irish government's on-going commitment to pursuing concrete actions on design has been reflected in the Action Plan for Jobs 2016 and 2017, with a significant number of design-focused actions helping maintain the momentum of ID2015 including:

- The establishment of the National Design Forum, led by DJEI and including key stakeholders from the private and public sectors.
- Strengthening Ireland's design capability and performance through Enterprise Ireland and DCCoI supports such as Regional Collaboration Funds, Start-Up Funds, International Trade Promotion, Clustering initiatives, Technology Gateways, Incubator initiatives and regional and sectoral networks.
- Exploiting opportunities for Ireland to win EU design collaboration funding.
- Expanding the 'Design 4 Growth' Initiative launched as part of ID2015 and led by Dublin City Local Enterprise Office, bringing small firms and designers together.
- Continued promotion of Irish design through our Embassies abroad and through Enterprise Ireland's export promotion activity.
- Enterprise Ireland working with DCCoI in promoting design thinking to their clients as a strategic element of business management.
- The Government's Future Skills Group looking at current provision of design skills and scoping out future skills needs.

Irish Design has witnessed a series of tectonic shifts in the decades since the 1961 Scandinavian Report. ID2015 and its legacy of collaboration and participation across sectors has helped build the platform for the creation of formal and informal design strategies that can help support design-led innovation, and map Ireland's evolving design landscape. There are without a doubt a number of lessons for other stakeholders seeking to influence design policy, notably, support from business champions, economic evidence to justify government action for design and continued momentum sustained by key stakeholders, among others.

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