

Nobody needs a logo anymore

By [Terry Levin](#)

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It's the dawn of the 20th annual Design Indaba in Cape Town. It's going to be a veritable orgy of design skills, thinking and artifacts various, which need to be opined, yet before it all starts, there is the story of a single logo that needs to be told. This does not aim to be an-depth exposé, it is just an opinion.

Since the Cape Town press allegedly "[leaked](#)" the new City of Cape Town logo a day or so ago, social media has been awash with downward pointing thumbs for the new offering, which had high hopes of being an improvement to the existing 10 year old Cape Town identity- the one with the Table Mountain.



Photo via [Salespeople.com](#)

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Right time for a new logo?

But as usual the furore is sadly misplaced - the scandal is not in the fact that the press allegedly leaked the logo, its cost or in its tender process that should be making the round logo into a political football. Nor is the scandal the fact that as some marketing analysts have been quoted as claiming, the new logo is "unnecessary" and that there was nothing wrong with old one.

Mayor Patricia de Lille has all the right [rationales](#) for the decision to consider a new logo and payoff line from 'This City Works For You' to 'Making Progress Possible. Together'.

That the new payoff line is more active, positive - has the words "possible" and "together" in it - which is all good, as they say.

What is not good, is that maybe being chosen as the [World Design Capital](#) has gone to our heads. We have already festooned the streets with yellow, rolling out hundred of activations with the intention of achieving a better life for all. But the hard fact is, when it comes to civic and even corporate design - nobody needs a logo anymore - they need a system.

Importance of a system

As the design for the [London Olympics](#) showed the world - a logo is useless without a system. What is going to be a little bit embarrassing is that the MD of Global Brand agency [Wolff Olins](#), Ije Nworie is on the Design Indaba programme this week and will no doubt include the London Olympic case study as part of his presentation for us all to gnash our teeth over and feel a little bit less smug than the capital of the World's Design community ought to.



It is no secret that Landor the agency tasked with revamping the logo for [The City of Melbourne](#), was inspired by the London Olympics - as having been a game changer in the approach to civic design - we evidently have not.

The fact that both the above systems cost fortunes and were for the most part hated by the public when they were first launched (and for all we know still are in some sectors) - does not mean that the haters of the new Cape Town logo are wrong - although they may be wrong for the wrong reasons.



Criteria not extensive enough

Despite the fact that every word of the payoff line has been carefully chosen to reflect a new ethos and that a circle no doubt signifies unity, whether the fact that the logo was leaked or

might cost too much to implement- are all irrelevant - the truth is a logo that sits on a van or a letterhead serves no purpose.

The criteria for the brief was not extensive enough - the city may have thought it needed a new logo, but it did not - it needed a system to unite all the aspects of the city - its suburbs, its public facilities, its music, its shopping, its gardens, its festivals, its cultures. This would have been a much bigger job than the paltry R300K which the logo ostensibly cost - but it may have been worth it. The agencies should have known this, they did not do the commensurate thinking required with an assignment of this nature. The logo does not love the city and the city is not loving the logo back.

Whether it has been leaked or not before being "approved", it is nowhere near expressing the character of Cape Town - it is not nearly as forward thinking, futuristic, vibrant, passionate, visionary or cool as the image of the city itself.

Nobody can say I am not a fan of the city, I love what they have done with the MyCiTi buses, I love living here, actually I love the line - "This city works for you", because it does! But I cannot deny that to end the agony of what has been dubbed variously in the social media as "a toxic sunflower", a "place mat" and a "technicolour bicycle chain", there is only one thing the incumbents can do, and that is go back to the drawing board with this "logo". Wait until the election year and the World Design Capital fiesta are over and give it another bash in 2015.

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