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From the specificity of the project in design to social innovation by design: a contribution

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Abstract: This contribution aims to understand the specificity of thinking and making social innovation, within and through the design field and its practice. The first part of this paper frames the relationships between project and design, characterising their definitions and goals. Design is presented as a discipline and field of action, where both thinking and the project process are directed at reaching a sustainable change in society. The second part of the paper presents how social innovation by design leads to new epistemological questions and dimensions within design's practices and challenges. Consequently, the University of Nimes' pedagogical and research-driven design initiative illustrates how a commitment to social innovation by design has fostered new productive practices and knowledge, in turn leading to new forms of participation, collaboration and interaction between actors and users. In our experience, mixed methods and interdisciplinary dialogues are key elements in achieving social innovation by design.

Keywords: design; project; social innovation; *project-grounded-research*.

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to define the specificity of the project in design as well as elaborate upon the University of Nîmes' approach to social innovation by design, via both its pedagogical strategy and its *Projekt* team, focused on "project-grounded research" (Findeli, 2015). Our question is twofold: what is the specificity of the project in social design? How might

universities develop pedagogical and research projects devoted to social innovation through design?

Our inquiry calls upon knowledge from several branches of the humanities and social sciences: the philosophy of design, sociology, semiotics, and the anthropology of communication. This paper consists of two parts. The first will focus on the specificity of the project in design; the second aims to demonstrate how social innovation through design is addressed, at the University of Nîmes, through both design education and the research team.

2. The specificity of the project in design

On the one hand, for a designer, nothing seems more natural than the "project" concept. It is as if there was a fundamental and founding assumption summarized in the equation: *"design making = project making."* As confirmed by the most comprehensive literature 'design' and 'project' are seen as somehow synonymous (Findeli & Bousbaci, 2005, p.38). Also, this concept calls forth the Anglo-Saxon *design project*, and the Italian *progettazione*, in which design's "project culture" finds its roots in the engineering and architecture schools where the first designers were trained.

On the other hand, over the past few decades, as a figure, the project has become the organisational matrix of most human activities in contemporary postmodern societies. In his monumental work *Anthropologie du projet* (1990), which Alain Findeli and Rabah Bousbaci rightfully describe as *"the richest theory of the project available"* to this day (Findeli & Bousbaci 2005, p. 47), the psychologist Jean-Pierre Boutinet gave a complete and near-exhaustive overview of the project, as a concept, and how it has become a social reality or a 'culture' (Boutinet, 1990).

However, Boutinet discussed the concept of *project* in a very broad sense. By *project*, he meant any socially observable conduct of anticipation, whether individual or collective. *"Speaking of an anthropology of the project is in the end questioning how individuals, groups, and cultures experience time"* (Boutinet, 1990, p. 5). Whereas traditional societies, considered '*hors-projet*' (projectless) or '*sans-projet*' (without project) (Boutinet, 1990, p. 2) focus on the preservation of the past and the ritualization of the present (especially due to religious fatalism), contemporary postmodern societies wish to control the future and actively seek to anticipate, predict and prepare.

Boutinet's entire argument consisted in the quest for a sort of anthropological constant within the 'variety of project situations' (Boutinet, 1990, p. 8), that is, to: "identify the different functions performed by any project in our culture compared to what can happen in other cultures" (Boutinet, 1990, p. 5). His immense work led to a typological analysis of the various forms of observable anticipation, and culminated in an extensive taxonomy of projects (Boutinet, 1990, p. 127; Boutinet, 1993, p. 56).

In this 'society of project accumulation' (Boutinet, 1990, p. 126), everything becomes the (subject or matter) of a project. Though this is quite noteworthy from an anthropological point of view, it nevertheless creates an epistemological dilemma for design.

Does the design project have a meaning and value of its own, which transcend the general determinisms of our hyper-projective era? In a word, what is the design project's status within a widespread culture of anticipation? If it does indeed exist, what is its specificity?

Which of design culture's characteristics are inherited exclusively from design or exclusively from architecture or engineering? Although they may share the *project*, as a fundamental, defining element. But, obviously, a *particular way* to be involved in and progress within a project in design that is characterized by its finality, its methods, its philosophy. The practice of the design project probably distinguishes itself from that of engineering by its mastery of formal language, its sensitivity to usage and its concern for the user experience. It may distinguish itself from architecture by the subject addressed (design was created mostly by architects), although construction is a highly specialized field of design involving specific project management. Finally, the practice of the design project differentiates itself from art, which is not a culture of design, notably due to the former's social purpose. One can therefore consider design as a *particular culture of conception*. To this end, without pretending to be exhaustive, we suggest below five distinctive characteristics of the culture of conception specific to design. These are the hypotheses to which our reflection has led, but which, to verify their relevance, would need to be developed and tested through further research:

1°) Design is a *project-grounded discipline*, as are architecture and engineering.

2°) Design is a project-grounded discipline founded upon a *specific creative culture*, which cannot be reduced to that of architecture, the decorative arts, engineering, or marketing. By this we mean a creative culture *sui generis*, possessing its own 'epistemological originality' (Findeli, 2003, p. 168) and, more generally, belonging to the '*third culture*' as defined by Archer and Cross (Cross, 1982, p. 221). According to Bruce Archer, refinement and complexity notwithstanding, only three skills essential to the foundation of any education remain: reading, writing and arithmetic — the 'three Rs' in English, *Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic* (Archer, 1979, p. 18).

Reading and writing refer to the essential skills that founded the field of Arts and Humanities (literary culture), while *arithmetic* is the essential skill that founded the field of science (scientific culture). The "third way of thinking" is the skill upon which is based on *modelling* or *giving shape* (creative culture). If the essential language of science is mathematical notation, and that of the humanities is natural language, then *"the essential language of design is modelling"* (Archer, 1979, p. 20). More recently, the following definition of the design project emphasizes this aspect rather well: *"In design theory (as in architectural theory where the concept originated), a project refers both to the sequence of actions required to produce a new artefact and the means usually used to represent the different*

stages of development of this artefact (sketches, drawings, plans, models, prototypes)." (Léchot Hirt, 2010, p. 29).

3°) Design is a project-grounded discipline with its own *mode of knowledge* or *understanding* through which it contributes to the contemporary *episteme*. The idea that there is a '*mode of knowledge*' exclusive to designers is based, according to K. Baynes, on the intuition of Herbert Read (*Art and Society*, 1945) according to whom there is "a 'mode of knowledge' distinct from mathematics, science or literature (Baynes, 1974, p. 47). If design is a 'third culture,' then it is not only a way to design and build artefacts but also, through them, a way of knowing and understanding the world (Findeli 2003, 2006, 2010).

4°) Design is a project-grounded discipline that is *philosophically committed to an ideal for a better and sustainable future*, whose goal is to improve the 'habitability of the world' (Findeli, 2010, p. 292). However, this idea is quite antiquated and dates back to Herbert Simon, who, in 1969 and in *The Sciences of the Artificial*, wrote: "Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones" (Simon, 1969, p. 111). More recently it has been said that design is fundamentally future-oriented because "Designers are people who are paid to produce visions of better futures and make those futures happen" (Koskinen et al, 2012, p. 42). This is why we have shown elsewhere that design creates 'idealects' (Vial, 2015b) or methodical and reasoned concepts that formulate desirable and achievable ideals describing the world as it must be.

5°) Design is a project-grounded discipline "in progress" in which the concept of *project* changes over time. For Findeli & Bousbaci (2005), three successive models of the design project exist: the *object-centred* model (until the beginning of the modern movement), the *process-centred* model (since 1950) and the *agent-centred* model (since the 1990s). One must also note that this development gradually attests to an "eclipse of the object as a focus of design project theories" (Findeli & Bousbaci, 2005, p. 47).

These are the five criteria, though worthy of further research, that allow us to confirm our hypothesis: there is indeed a specificity of the design project. To complete our argument, we propose the following definition:

> Engaging in a design project means designing, in reference to an ideal of the world, a complex artefactual and/or service device that gives form to usages while producing knowledge, in response to a request or dissatisfaction, and through a constantly evolving rigorous methodology that aims at, improving the habitability of the world, in a creative and innovative manner.

This definition that highlights the articulation between design and project is the cornerstone from which we lead applied research and educational experimentations at the University of Nîmes.

3. Social innovation by design at the University of Nîmes

3.1 Theoretical roots and scientific positioning

In order to transcend the idea of innovation that its multiple available iterations (political, technical, popular, and scholarly) currently convey, we will discuss the notion of social innovation that has resurfaced of late in academic debate, particularly in the field of design. Social innovation might be defined as "an interference initiated by social agents in an attempt to offer a response to an aspiration, to provide for a need, to suggest a solution, or seize an opportunity to act, in order to modify social interactions, transform the framework for action, or consider fresh cultural orientations." (Laville, Klein, Moulaert 2014). The scientific debate surrounding social innovation reveals two points of view: one focuses on the capacity to create social wealth (philanthropy, social capital, social economy); the other seeks to validate social innovation as a contributing factor to democratisation (knowledge society, new governance). Thus conceived and deliberated, social innovation is either contextualised, selective action, or structuring and systemic. Within this polarised debate, it seems important to establish our own position, one rooted in design and the project dynamic.

Improving the "inhabitability of the world" (Findeli, 2010) is a central issue design seeks to address. Hence, the social element is fundamental to any design approach. In his writing, Munari truly insisted upon the projector's function in bettering daily life, using his/her own creative skill to transform in a concretely innovative capacity (Munari, 1981). Social design seems especially inclined to coax design back towards its roots, reflecting, in part, the will of a number of researchers and designers to distance themselves from industrial design in order to underscore the fact that "the design process's ultimate priority should not be, by nature, commercial" (Vial, 2015a, p.74). As such, social innovation stands in opposition to technology-based and economy-based innovation. Social innovation by design "restores design's inherent nature," that is, a project-grounded discipline, as works by the Bauhaus, Roger Tallon, Victor Papanek, or even Alain Findeli, have demonstrated.

At this juncture, it seems opportune to describe the five principles stated in the "Manifesto for a social and critical renewal of design." First, "an authentic design act is a social and critical act." Second, design, when positioned in favour# of social innovation, should function towards "improving the lives of others and the community." Such practice "inevitably participates in the definition of an enhanced mutual understanding within a community." Furthermore, designers' training must include "a reasonable acquisition of the conceptual framework shared with the social sciences and the humanities." Finally, design is first and foremost invested in "the relationships that exist between human beings, each other, and their environments, as well as the means of enhancing the quality of their shared existence, expressions of contemporary cultures, and notions of the common good." (Gauthier, Proulx, Vial, 2015, p.121-122).

It seems interesting to inquire into the conditions of this revival of an ethical approach to design. What, within the current anthropological, sociocultural, economic, and ecological context, has encouraged this resurgence? Our hypermodern societies are experiencing a transitional period wherein sustainability is both a concern and an imperative. This context has encouraged increased consideration for social innovation by design. Greater awareness of our planet's limits has inspired fresh approaches to working, living, cohabitating, and producing both objects and knowledge, thereby leading us to explore new models linking *design* and *value for society*. This paradigm shift is rooted in the fundamental values that define what we call *progress* and *quality of life*. Such progress is no longer perceived as something that can be apprehended on the scale of the individual, such progress must be concerned with the greater good, or at the very least, some form of common good (Deni, 2014, p.133).

This context is fertile ground for the development of a design culture that marries the local and the global (Enzio Manzini calls this *cosmopolitan localism*) and generates "a resilient infrastructure capable of requalifying work," improving our shared existence (by offering different types of co-working and co-living), "bringing production closer to consumption (distributed systems)", and even allowing us "to make better use of the connectivity that is available to us" (Manzini, 2015, p.2). Positioning design thus towards social innovation also finds its roots in citizens' struggles to resolve everyday issues. It has urged us to "(re)discover the power of collaboration" and "new forms of organization" (Manzini, 2015, p.3) focused on users, and it has encouraged the production of artefacts and services related to their daily lives.

In this light, we should distinguish between social design and social innovation by design. Where social design refers to design's ability to resolve "particularly problematic situations (such as extreme poverty, illness, or social exclusion)" (Manzini, 2015, p.64), social innovation by design focuses on "everything that expert design can do to activate, sustain, and orient processes of social change toward sustainability" (Manzini, 2015, p.62).

Thus, social innovation by design is related to other forms of design such as "sustainable design, non commercial service design, and public policy design" (Manzini, 2015, p.3). This positioning of design transcends industry and relates to emerging community and individual actors, with the involvement of a global community of user-citizens. There is an increasing number of co-design projects, in which users are actively involved in the project's conception. Human-centred-design has thus evolved towards stakeholder-centred-design, (Manzini, 2007). In this, social innovation implies a socio-political dimension that recognizes the individual and the community's power to act.

Nonetheless, we feel it is important to underscore the designer's role as a coordinator in these co-design projects, similar to that of a director in a cinematographic or audio-visual project. In such a nascent context, where both human and material resources are precious, the projector-designer figure distances itself from an industrial design *maestro*, where a single author embraces a project's responsibility. A designer implicated in social innovation

becomes a sort of skill hub or coordinator (Deni, 2014). Providing for today's needs urges us, inspired by T. Maldonado, to view the designer as an *intellectual technician* whose wide-ranging and complex skillset is essential in overcoming the diverse challenges faced in a variety of fields (Deni, 2014). As underscored by Enzo Manzini, design's vocation is to accompany the manner in which individuals redefine their existence in self-initiated, singular, or collective projects. The designer's role is therefore to encourage social change by creating favorable conditions for collaborative work. Fablabs, as emerging phenomenon in a number of cities globally, are an interesting example of free experimentation. Designers, alongside researchers in social sciences and the humanities and ordinary citizens, have an important role to play in developing projects that cater to populations' needs while simultaneously, and in a horizontal dynamic, sharing their skills and knowledge. These new, citizen-initiated, projects also question the mediation and regulation roles public institutions have traditionally held. It is now up to the latter to fully measure their populations' ability to self-organize, via empowerment and agency practices such as grassroots democracy and new governance.

Social innovation by design is built upon four fundamental pillars: creative communities, collaborative networks, multi-local society, and new government tools (Manzini, 2007). We believe these four values afford pertinent leads for following through with design projects that can be meaningful to all involved. Nonetheless, previous experiences in the field of social innovation are of invaluable counsel, providing insight into "what works and what could work better" (Mulgan, 2014), particularly when it comes to public policy and services. "A majority of public service design has failed to call upon designers or multiples design methods" (Mulgan, 2014). Furthermore, beyond the existing movement towards incorporating design into public policy, designers must become part "of teams that bring together complementary skillsets" (Mulgan, 2014). This implies a need for designers to adapt to the specific context of public policy and services, accepting both to learn from user-citizens and decision-makers. This particular sector's history must also be taken into consideration such that social innovation by design is brought in gradually, as designer-coordinated interdisciplinary teams are progressively entrusted with projects. Moreover, "teams engaged in design need a combination of skills to ensure awareness of organisational, economic, political and social contexts, and they need project managers who are genuinely polyvalent across a range of fields and disciplines" (Mulgan, 2014).

These theoretical roots serve as the basis for our description of our pedagogical and research projects within the University of Nîmes undergraduate and graduate level programs, as well as those of our research team, *Projekt*, as they collectively embody our approach to social innovation by design.

3.2 Innovation by design in our educative and research team

From an educational perspective, the University of Nîmes' teaching staff strives to train designers that are conscious of the responsibility inherent to designing as an act, via an

interdisciplinary design approach and a strong social sciences and humanities culture. This explains the overhaul of our undergraduate model to include social science and humanities courses into our *Licence Design*[1] curriculum. Revising our educational framework in this manner is in fact in keeping with the Bauhaus tradition. Design is no longer viewed as an "applied art" but as an "involved, situated or embedded science" (Findeli, 2001, p.10). Designers-in-the-making are taught design's ethical values, in order for them to be conscious of the expectation for them "to **act** rather than to **make"** and that "each time they engage themselves in a design project, they somehow recreate the world" (Findeli, 2001, p.14). Furthermore, the University of Nîmes offers the first French Masters in Design, specialized in social innovation, implemented by Alain Findeli and Georges Schambach in 2011. In both the graduate (Masters) and undergraduate (Licence) programs, students are taught diversified project-management methods, most often the result of real commissions from our partners (Departmental Council, the PACA Region, Marseille public hospital system, University hospital of Nîmes). Projects are the result of a close collaboration with all stakeholders. The University of Nîmes hopes to offer a complete degree program in design, from undergraduate to doctorate level. At the Licence and Masters level, students are trained within workshops that form a sort of experimental laboratory of the design project, in order to conceive and then test projects in association with our partners and projects' stakeholders.

The Master DIS proposes several projects directly solicited by various partners. These design projects last usually one semester. Each project is managed by a designer and supervised by the coordinators of the master. During the duration of each design project, the majority of the Master courses converge on the same project. As in many programs, these courses cover both theoretical lessons - here in the field of the humanities and the social sciences - and practical tools or techniques for design. Nevertheless the master DIS finds its originality and specificity to allow students to integrate users and all stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the problem to solve. Furthermore, our project partners help us identify suitable field of study at once by giving us access to relevant services and facilitating us the opportunity to approach the users. The diagram below helps to visualize the synergies between the educational process and its implementation in projects made by students with professional partners around the public domain.

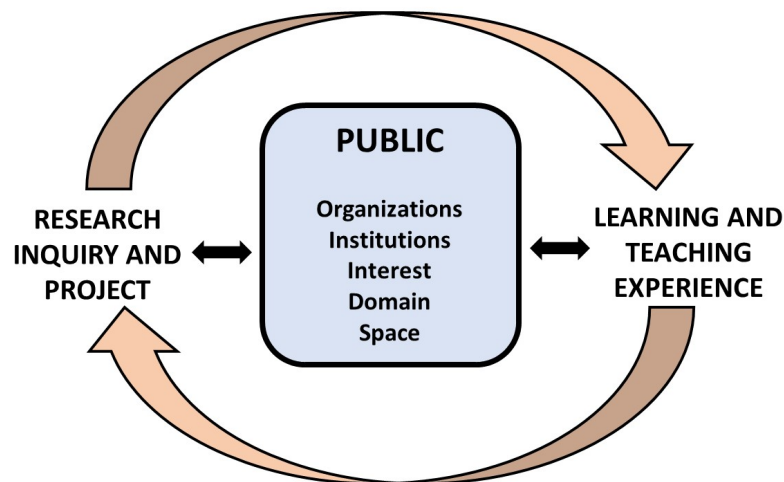
[1] Licence Design web site: http://lid.unimes.fr

Figure 1 Diagram of the relationship between the research team and teaching activities in the project

Here are a few examples of projects undertaken in our Masters program in 2014-2016.

The "MON AVENIR NUM'ERIC" (MY DIGITAL FUTURE, with a play on words involving the name ERIC – an acronym for Regional Internet Citizen Spaces) project endeavored to create tools for the staff working in the *ERIC*, allowing them to reach out to local youth, assess their potential, certify their skills and endorse them to local employers. Students therefore generated a digital potential and proficiency assessment tool for untrained youth. Another project, "RENDONS SERVICE À[2]" (Let's be of service to), aimed at tackling social and professional integration in the Gard department. The project sought to rethink the possible relationships between the relevant authorities (employment centers, health centers, welfare, etc…) and the *Actions Collectives d'Insertion* (Community Integration Associations) who provide assistance to those who receive the *RSA* (state welfare stipend). Additionally, this last project was part of a partnership with the Gard Departmental Council and has led to further collaborations with the University, including projects slated for 2016 (such as a project focused on elder day care in nursing home), as well as several internships for students, as designers operating within Council's public services. The objective of another project, "WHAT'HEALTH", was twofold: increase vaccination rates and allow users of the vaccination clinic to make informed choices. Here, the research phase was essential and enabled an immersion in the medical field, in order to fully seize its complexities and an understanding of all the actors' and stakeholders' interests. These different phases led to two distinct, yet complementary, projects. The first, "*Taquine ta santé*" (or 'Tease your health', refers to the name of a French game, le *taquin*, which consists of sliding puzzle plates to be arranged in a specific order), a specially-conceived *taquin* game was placed in waiting rooms. Both educational and amusing, it provided patients with health information

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[2] The «Rendons Service À» project was the result of a partnership with the *Conseil Départémental du Gard*, during a course taught by Yves Voglaire (service designer et founder of ORIGINN), Michela Deni and Alain Findeli. Participating students were: Rania Amami, Fanny Blanquier, Baptiste Boucourt, Emmanuelle Coutton, Marjorie Damaye, Elodie Deleglise, Domitille Desrippes, Yvan Ferault, Marie Gatefossey, Guillaume Hoguet, Kevin Kermer Sandrine Pirolles.

as they slid the puzzle pieces around. The patient acquires information crucial to his/her wellbeing and reclaims control over his/her healthcare choices. The second project is "Healthcare," cards, similar to reminder notes, are laid out in the medical offices. These prompt the patient to bring up sensitive or overlooked topics with his/her doctor. An interactive application is also available, helping to simplify the process of managing one's health. One more project is "*AMENAGER L'HÔPITAL POUR*" (Developing the hospital for), focused on hospitality and care for families in hospitals, which was the result of a commission from the APHM[3] (Marseille's public hospital system). Finally, let us cite the project due to the partnership with Paca Labs (Regional Council PACA) "L'INITIATION À L'INNOVATION CENTRÉE USAGER". The aim of this project was to introduce to companies design methods for innovating[4].

To explain the interplay synergies between the stakeholders within the projects managed in our Master program, we propose the diagram below. The objective of this visualisation is to synthesize the key actors interplaying in every project that can be realised by the students with our partners.
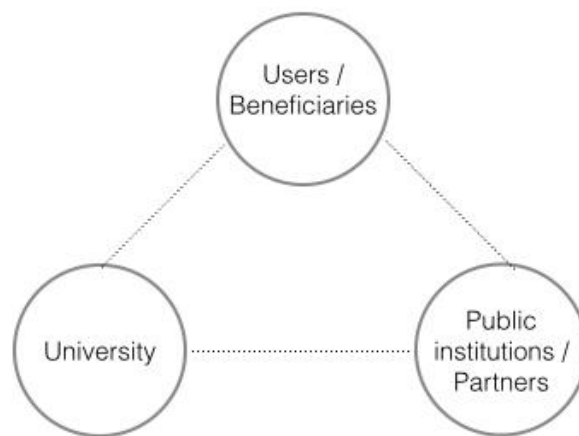

Figure 2 : Visualization of the synergies between the stakeholders within the projects

On the research end, the *Projekt* team is currently being established within the University of Nîmes. Initiated in 2012 by Alain Findeli, the project to form a design research team is close

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[3] This project was undertaken in partnership with the APHM during a course taught by Marie Coirié (designer specialized in the development of healthcare tracks, co-founder of Care & Co.,), Michela Deni and Alain Findeli. Participating students were: Rania Amami, Fanny Blanquier, Baptiste Boucourt, Emmanuelle Coutton, Marjorie Damaye, Elodie Deleglise, Domitille Desrippes, Yvan Ferault, Marie Gatefossey, Guillaume Hoguet, Kevin Kermer, Sandrine Pirolles.

[4] This project in partnership with the Paca Labs during a course taught by Fabrice Pincin (designer), Michela Deni and Georges Schambach. Participating students were: Rania Amami, Fanny Blanquier, Zoé Bonnardot, Baptiste Boucourt, Emmanuelle Coutton, Marjorie Damaye, Elodie Deleglise, Domitille Desrippes, Forian Domergue, Mareva Faucheux, Stacie Petruzzellis, Yvan Ferault, Marie Gatefossey, Guillaume Hoguet, Sandrine Pirolles, Camille Senaux.

to completion. Teacher-researchers from a variety of social science and humanities disciplines (design science, philosophy, sociology, language sciences, semiotics, communication and information sciences, anthropology, art history) contribute alongside designer-researchers, temporary lecturer-researchers, doctorate and post-doctorate students. The team favours a project-grounded research approach (Findeli, 2015, p.43), which implies research projects grounded in design projects done in collaboration with our socio-economic partners (regional and local authorities, both public and private firms, public administrations and institutions). Thus considered, « Design research is a systematic search for and acquisition of knowledge related to extended human ecology considered from a designerly way of thinking, i.e. a project-oriented perspective » (Findeli, 2010, p.293).

Projekt is resolutely open to research and development (R&D) and action research, via the project in design. Its main concern is the progress of fundamental research based upon the definition of social innovation as it relates to: service design, co-design, and policy design. These fields are approached from an epistemological, practical, ethical, aesthetic, technological, and pedagogical perspective, and are purposefully rooted in the social sciences and the humanities[5].

The team's broad research interests are human beings and their relationship with the environment (human ecology), the project as a concept, and service design. Project-grounded research, and social innovation by design form the team's common axis, which also feed into to two other axes: "design, territories, public policy" and "design, mediation, digital culture." Research programs developed within the team set a shared goal: to contribute to reflections on ways to humanize services, to incite an overhaul of the perceived authority to conceive and act, and to encourage user-appropriation of services. Programs currently underway include the following projects. A research project associated with the DIS Masters' pedagogical framework, in partnership with local authorities, citizens, and organized groups (companies, associations), that will generate requests for devices, actions, and programs dedicated to new lifestyles and contemporary individual tracks (residential, personal, professional). Determined to appreciate the relationship between lifestyles and contemporary habitats, *Projekt* has initiated research focused on understanding the emergence and synergy of services and initiatives in the development and management of alternative habitats. This research is affiliated with social and participative design, and undertaken in connection with public territorial action and local actors (networks, organizations, users).

Furthermore, we should mention the methodological influence of semiotics, communication anthropology, and other social science and humanities disciplines, as they relate to health and service design, especially when working with the elderly.

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[5] Selected elements of this paragraph are based upon Alain Findeli's 2012 words when he created the Projekt team, being rewritten today by the current team.

In association with designer-researchers, the team also foresees the development of other tracks in the field of digital technologies, rethinking the interaction between users, interfaces, and their environment. This calls forth issues of information ecology, and digital ecology from both an environmental and social standpoint. An example of project-grounded research in this field would be the transfer of control of Big data (on an individual level) over to user-citizens, in projects related to the digital city, common interest projects, and healthcare, all of which call forth digital design as well as public policy and service design.

4. Conclusion

Several elements from this contribution can be emphasised to serve as a conclusion. The paper opened with a reflection on the specificity of the project in relation to design, reframing the theoretical milestones of the research-project intention. Epistemological questions associated with design practices illustrated designers' intentions and obligations in the project process. Where the latter frames general intentions and formulates desires, it is design's disciplinary language and field of action that is aimed at improving the "inhabitability of the word" (Findeli, 2010). The specificity of the design-project relationship engages the practice and its actors in a responsible, social orientation of their role in society. Considered through the social lens, this idea of sustainability grounds the work and episteme of design.

In the second part of this paper, we specified the importance and pertinence of social innovation by design within project intention and action. Based upon the University of Nimes' Design department's pedagogical and research orientation towards social innovation by design, this paper illustrates several potential imperatives and approaches. Pedagogical commitment to social innovation by design involves multiple tools and disciplines (from STS to all the social sciences and humanities). Additionally, social ideals based upon a grounded view of contemporary world and society drive both research questions and design projects. Via an array of actions, building social innovation by design irrigates many sectors and social spheres: it orients public policies, recognizes local communities, sustains philanthropic and solidarity initiatives, defends users and rights of use, and fosters trust and quality of life in cities.

This said, where should we go from here? The use of the word 'contribution' in this paper's title outlines the intentional framework of a potential manifesto based upon the University of Nimes' research and educational vision. Therefore, we hope this paper's outline of social innovation by design for the research-project action might serve as a starting point for a future constructive dialogue between design pedagogy, theory and practice.

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