

Public design and social innovation: Learning from applied research

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Abstract: The design approach is increasingly adopted as a creative process to create innovation in organization. The process is based on the holistic way designers apprehend problems. Even though the design approach is sensitive to human experiences, its contribution in generating innovation is uncertain. In the light of a literature review on how design for social innovation should be conducted, we propose to revisit research projects in public and social contexts undertaken by the authors in the last ten years. This paper hopes to shed light on what is recommended in literature and on what really happens in the practice of public design projects. Over the years, the authors produced a considerable amount of design research centered on the implantation of public infrastructures in urban and regional landscapes. Sometimes, these research projects caused challenges for the nearby populations as well as for the general public in terms of social acceptability issues. This paper proposes a first critical observation of Quebec's public design research contexts through the analysis of three types of design research projects: a thesis, an applied research on public infrastructures for a public organization and an academic research financed by public funds on public infrastructures.

Keywords: Social innovation; Public design; Landscape studies; Design research

1. Introduction

Nowadays, many governments are tackling numerous socioeconomic challenges where the procedures and ways of doing are questioned as well as their underlying institutions and politics (Julier & Moor, 2010; 27e Région, 2010; Best, 2012). As a matter of fact, some suggest that public management should profoundly reform its structure to take up on environmental and social issues and address some of today's challenges, for instance: the introduction of new technologies, the aging population, the crisis in infrastructures, the climate changes as well as the pressure on public finances (Sørensen & Torfing, 2012). In the



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light of these observations, design as a strategy and methodology is seen, by many authors, as a promising avenue to meet these challenges or at least reduce their negative effects on people (Manzini, 2014; Kolko, 2013; Gardien & al., 2014). Furthermore, the recent interest for design thinking suggests that an innovation model oriented towards design could offer particularly effective tools to tackle these challenges (Kimbell, 2009; 2011; 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2011; Design Council, 2013; DBA, A. P. D. I. G. i. a. w., 2010; Sangiorgi & al., 2015; Bason & al., 2014).

Sangiorgi and al. (2015), in a very recent report on design for innovation in public services, observed that designers still tended to work in a traditional way, that is, in a product delivery logic that seeks to meet the differentiation of the market offer and in doing so, is limiting the scope of design strategies. However, public design should be closely linked to an approach involving profound changes in the design practice and in the organization as well as in the overall configuration of the offer. Bason and al. (2014) in their latest book on design in public policy transformations showed skilfully that design is in mutation and that we should go beyond the tangible purpose of design. In this way, a reference to Buchanan's, *Design Orders*, would be useful for his proposition of the organization of the design practices and manifestations in four categories:

1. Graphic - Signs, symbols, prints
2. Industrial - Products
3. Interaction - Services, experiences, interfaces, information
4. Systems - Business, organizations, education, government

Drawing from its different practices and manifestations, public design was mainly developed around the public participation and the participatory democracy interest (Bason & al., 2014; Sanoff, 2000). These interests gravitated towards design in the 1970's with participatory design approaches, which really crystallized with the keen enthusiasm of the 2000's for co-design and service design (Sanoff, 200; Bason & al., 2014). Thus, public design falls in this social shift for design: "This shift is in part captured by the movement of social entrepreneurship and social innovation (Mulgan & al., 2006; Ellis, 2000), and in part by the growing interest in public sector innovation" (Bason & al., 2014; 9). Hence, public design is concerned by social innovation and it carries interventions in public contexts (education, health, mobility, transport, infrastructures) as well as all projects which are in the public space and are shared by all (urban property, landscapes, real estate and facilities).

2. Design's social innovation models

The Réseau Québécois en Innovation Sociale (RQIS) defines social innovation as: a new idea, approach or intervention, a new service, a new product or a new law, a new organization type that provides a more adequate and sustainable response than the existing solutions to a well-defined social need; a solution that finds favour within an institution, an organization or a community and that produces a measurable social benefit for the collectivity and not only for certain individuals (RQIS, 2011). Thus, the social innovation notion could be defined

as a transformational approach, which differs from technological innovations (Mulgan, 2012; Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). In fact, Cajaiba-Santana (2014) states that the acceleration of social changes engages challenges that exceed technocentric approaches. However, even though the notion of social innovation is widely used, there are only a few existing research projects on the subject and they are quite often sparse and the selected concepts incoherent (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014).

Design, by its iterative nature and its process centered on the transformation of a problematic situation or ill-defined problem towards a more desirable state, in the sense of Herbert Simon's (1969) and of Rittel and Webber (1973) wicked problem, could be a favourable approach to social innovation (Département de Loire-Atlantique, 2014; Manzini, 2014; Bason, 2014; Manzini & Staszowski, 2013). Manzini (2014; 2015) underlines that design could encourage the implementation of realistic, effective, sustainable and reproducible social innovations. Furthermore, Manzini thinks that design innovation could address challenges caused by the ongoing economic crisis and foster the transition towards sustainability and equity. Manzini also states that social innovation evolves with society and that creates an open window on possibilities never explored before. In doing so, Manzini promotes the idea that design can be a social change agent. Gardien and al. (2014), in turn, studied the changes in the actual practice of design in regards to socioeconomic issues. Their analysis is based on a categorization of the different socioeconomic paradigms that have crossed design practice history (industrial, experience, knowledge and transformation economy) and to stress that to innovate in an ever-changing society, we have to be able to adapt to social change. Design as interpretation (Verganti, 2009) is an approach less focused on social innovation but more on the notion of innovation by design. In this perspective, Verganti stresses that the knowledge alone of design thinking tools and techniques are not enough, because design is, first and foremost, a capacity to interpret the world by giving it meaning through an object and/or a service. Moreover, design should allow the transformation of negative experiences into positive ones. In other words, design could offer the possibility to move from a hostile environment to a comfortable or satisfactory one (Norman & Verganti, 2014) or, at the very least, towards a socially acceptable one. Norman and Verganti (2014) emphasize that if the objective is a new understanding of what is important to people than design projects sustained by innovation research can lead to radical innovation on the meaning given to objects and/or services. Moreover, Norman and Verganti also highlight that innovation research by design based on interpretation processes can generate distinctive and reproducible radical changes. In addition, Bentley (2014) states that the emergence of design in the public context sets prominently the strategic role of design and its place in the project process as well as in the public governance. Moreover, it comes as no surprise that some studies show that design is an innovation factor when the management approach is focused on design and supported within the organizations executives (Szostak & al., 2011; Rampino, 2011; Baglieri & al., 2008; Jenkins, 2008).

From this perspective, we understand that to be profitable, design should be transversely integrated to the entire organization and carried through a strategic culture of design as an

innovation methodology. In doing so, the designer is no longer seen as a punctual contributor of creative expertise in projects. Hence, innovation by design imposes three types of changes in the way of doing things (Gagnon & Côté, 2015): changes in the design processes, changes in the generated experiences and changes in the organizations' environment. The following model is attempting to delimit the diversity and plurality of the manifestations of social innovation by design in public contexts.

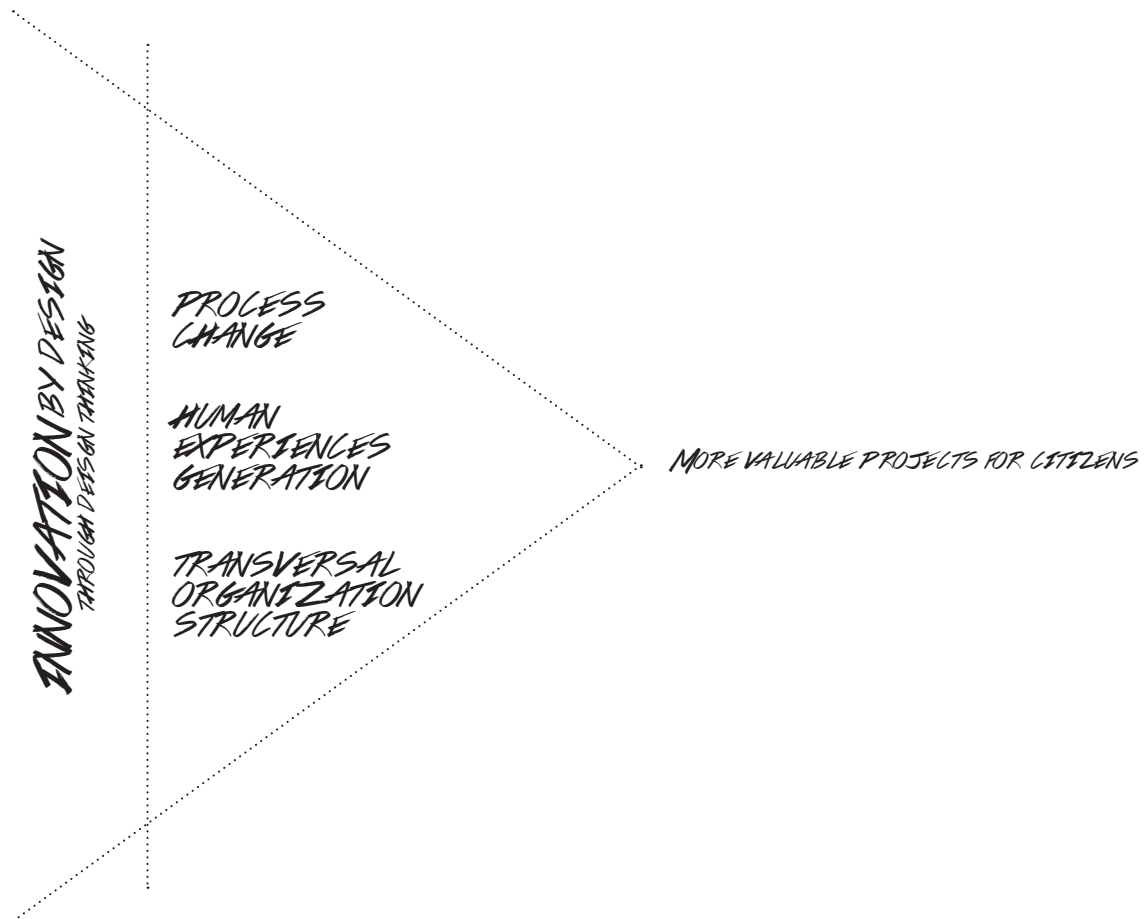


Figure 1 Innovation by design framework

3. Social innovation by design and public context: 3x changes

3.1 An iterative and collaborative process

The design thinking approach is increasingly adopted as a creative process to create innovation in organization. The process is based on the holistic way designers apprehend problems and can generally be described in 4 or 5 stages based on convergent and divergent thinking techniques (Kimbell, 2014). The Design Council (2013) characterizes it as a process that begins with a discovery phase where different perspectives fuse and then converge to define a problematic. In fact, some qualify this stage as empathic because it is where the

information from the lived and felt experience of the individuals concerned with the studied problematic is collected (Authors, 2014). Afterwards, the propositions are developed and delivered (Design Council, 2013). Kimbell (2014) adds that these stages are interconnected and are often achieved in a disorderly manner or at least in a nonlinear way. Furthermore, Kimbell also indicates that design thinking and design practice are two different perspectives and the design thinking methods evolve mainly outside of the traditional practice of design where ideation is often conducted intuitively and implicitly (Kimbell, 2009). These process changes generally imply the introduction of a more sensitive attitude towards human experiences in the development of innovative solutions. This kind of sensitivity is largely handled by integrating empathy in the design process as reflected by the employment of ethnographic and co-design tools in the design practice (Authors, 2014; Bason, 2014; Kimbell, 2009, 2014; Köppen & Meinel, 2012; Manzini, 2015). Moreover, in the public management contexts, a growing number of participatory and co-design approaches are arising and many think that collaborative innovation provides one way of transforming public projects (Sørensen & Torfing, 2012).

3.2 A transformation through a renewed and more human experience

Even though the design thinking approach is sensitive to human experiences, its contribution in generating innovation is uncertain. In this perspective, Verganti (2009) proposes that it is the contribution of a significant experience that brings innovation to a design project and that the changed experience of an object or a service can create radical innovation. The Design Council report (2013) on design for public good demonstrated that the overall product and service experience is essential to value creation. These experiences which tie the tangible and the intangible lead to the proposition of what many call service design. This applies to an interdisciplinary practice of design that analyses the ecosystem services in order to create a coherent and enjoyable experience adapted to the expectations and the needs of the people it intends to serve. Even though service design is often associated to the digital world, it is not limited to it. In fact, service design looks into extensive details related to the citizen's daily activities as well as those who provide the service (managers, attendants, etc.) In this way, designing a service really means creating a customer service counter, a waiting room, signalization delivered through diverse forms, a website, an application or even a park bench. In summary, service design when applied to public design allows the adoption of a holistic approach involving all design disciplines to intervene appropriately towards a specific problematic (Design Council, 2013).

3.3 A strategic role for design in organizations

In order to go even further, the role of design in organizations should also be questioned. Postma and al. (2012) stresses that it is not enough to introduce empathic approaches and rely upon human experiences in design projects. Actually, this perspective should be widely supported and maintained throughout the organization. Thus, according to the Design Council (2013), design in public contexts is based on three distinctive features of social

innovation by design: multidisciplinary teamwork, commitment towards citizens and holistic approaches in the study of public services. In this perspective, design is seen as a way to surpass organizational silo structures and encourage collaborative work, as a continuous validation approach generating few risks through iteration and prototyping and, as focused on the diversity of human needs with tools offering tangible solutions to the raised issues (Design Council, 2013; Best, 2012). Hence, the Design Council has categorized the integration of design in public contexts in three steps with The Public Sector Design Ladder:

1. **Design for discrete problems:** Professional practice of design aiming to improve a specific situation with product and service development.
2. **Design as capability:** Integration of design to the public service projects culture in its exercise as well as in the decision making process. The managers have the capacity to seize the role of design allowing the integration of design professionals in projects to identify problems in an overall innovation by design approach (*design thinking*).
3. **Design for policy:** Integration of *design thinking* to the development of public policies.

4. From textbook to fieldwork: What gives?

In the light of how design for social innovation should be conducted, we propose to revisit research projects in public and social contexts undertaken by the authors in the last ten years. Hence, we are dwelling on how these projects can be included in social innovation by design framework models introduced earlier (Gagnon & Côté, 2015). How can design be brought up to it and what role does it play in creating meaning for communities and public organizations? Therefore, this classification aims at understanding the existing and/or non-existing links between research and practice of public design in Quebec. More specifically, on how its strategic role can or cannot prescribe a social innovation methodology. This first critical review is inscribed in a larger research project intended to study social innovation in public design in Quebec. In other words, the intention is to clarify Quebec's design contribution to social innovation in public contexts in order to categorize the practices, the processes and the consequences on communities and organizations. Ultimately, this design research review is questioning the benefits of research findings in public design contexts as well as in the inherent constraints of design's applied research.

4.1 Public design research: The analysis of three types of design research projects

This paper hopes to shed light on what is recommended in literature and on what happens in the practice of public design projects. Over the years, the authors produced a considerable amount of design research centered on the implantation of public infrastructures in urban and regional landscapes. Sometimes, these research projects caused challenges for the nearby populations as well as for the general public in terms of social acceptability issues. Thus, these research projects were mostly developed as expert

guidance or monitoring approaches in an implantation project enquiring alongside the design's role as a social acceptability strategy. Methodologically, the research projects adopted a mixed (mainly) qualitative approach integrating semi-conducted interviews with concerned populations, in situ visual and experiential analyses as well as project process analyses. Furthermore, it is important to mention that very few critical studies on Quebec's design practices have been conducted (Choko, Bourassa & Baril, 2003; Baril & Comeau, 2002; Racine & Findeli, 2003; Desrosiers, 2009, 2010, 2011; Messier, 2013). In reference to the most recent studies of Desrosiers (2011) and Messier (2013), we observed that these research projects focused more on the professionalization of the design practice in Quebec than on design as an innovation methodology. Moreover, we observed that very few studies discussed design's contribution in public contexts with the exception of the interest raised from public contract competitions (Desrosiers, 2011).

In a more general sense, the discussions around the strategic role of design in the overall publications is quite new and is often more a statement of intent or a promoting effort than a critical portrait supported by empirical studies or theoretical reflections. However, we should mention the work of Bason and al. (2014); Manzini and Staszowski (2013) as well as of Sangiorgi and al. (2015) as exceptions. These publications have identified different public design manifestations but without necessarily drawing a clearer picture of the situation. Thus, none of Quebec's contributions are listed except for a Canadian initiative that is briefly described in Bason's (2014) publication. Furthermore, Bason (2014) as well as Manzini and Staszowski (2013) highlighted that more studies should be pursued to get a better grasp and understanding of social manifestations in design, particularly in public contexts with regards to assessing its contributions. Therefore, this paper proposes a first critical observation of Quebec's public design research contexts through the analysis of three types of design research projects: a thesis, an applied research on public infrastructures for a public organization and an academic research funded by public funds on public infrastructures. We will initiate this analysis on the basis of our literature review regarding social innovation and design thinking in public action. We will also study the relation between design research and its impact on public projects by identifying the designer's and public manager's roles in these projects.

Thesis Context - Energy infrastructures

This research was conducted in the context of a thesis. This kind of research was proposed in the hopes of improving the understanding of design in public context and enlightening the way we could transform actual public procedures with the contribution of design as well as with an evidence-based knowledge. The research project synthesis that follows illustrates our point.

The major challenges led by the implantation of high-voltage power lines mainly concerns the physical, spatial and social integration to the territory. In Quebec, it is important to know

that these projects are conducted by a state-owned enterprise and implies complex environmental assessment processes achieved by experts and involving public hearings. Generally, these processes lead to a reactive position from stakeholders, namely for or against this kind of projects. In fact, many of these infrastructure projects had to face considerable social protest in regards to the major transformations these industrial equipments bring to the territory causing important changes in the living conditions. These equipments are considered ugly by the population, they degrade, damage and even worse, destroy the landscape. In this sense, many discussions and debates, from North America and Europe, regarding the implantation of high-voltage power lines demonstrated that the aesthetic dimension of these projects is a dominant factor of their social acceptability and that sometimes, constitutes a major obstacle to the implantation of new power lines. Moreover, even though citizens' concerns towards these kinds of projects are usually of landscape nature, project managers used design as a mitigation measure and therefore, as a punctual intervention striving to aesthetically improve the equipment in order to get the project accepted.

The results of this particular research relied on three types of data (in situ observations of high-voltage power lines implanted in the territory, public hearing memoir analyses on environmental issues and semi-conducted interview analyses) limiting the phenomenon to its spatial, social and political dimensions. Moreover, this research questioned the design's role in its ability to respond to landscape and social problems when restricted to the design of a "beautiful" electric pylon to allow a "reformed landscape". This can be illustrated by many design competitions taking place over the years. More recently, with ENEL, EDF and FINDGRID contests as well as with the emblematic project of Henry Dreyfuss in the 1960's. However, this research pursued the reintegration of design in the global approach of the project, particularly during the planning phase in order to go beyond the embellishment strategy usually employed over the years. Thus, the research introduced a reflection on the political instrumentalization of the one-off use of design and in doing so, mirroring the reparation logic more than the creative use for communities. Insofar as the social discourse tends to valorize the absence of equipment to enhance the overall landscape, the electrical pylons design becomes a strategy inscribed in a wider landscape project that greatly relies upon reconciliation measures in tune with the everyday realities of the territory. Hence, design here becomes a political mediation tool that explicitly aims at gaining acceptance of the implantation of a power line. More so, the landscape issue is diverted from its social complexity by lessening the equipment's value solely on its visual and formal considerations.



Figure 2 Energy infrastructure project: Lachine Canal promenade (Montreal, Canada)

Applied research on public infrastructure for public organization¹

In this kind of research we usually propose to study two or three elements for the conception of an infrastructure, namely its vegetal, visual and/or social components in pre or post implantation contexts. The nature of the contracts with the public organizations generally indicates the kind of data to be studied and the publication (or not) of the findings. This political and contextual sensitivity may explain the difficulty to really orient these kinds of research projects in a more evidence-based approach.

A mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative data is typically proposed and chosen to illustrate that design projects should use a variety of methods to better comprehend the generated effects of an infrastructure. The chosen methodology will generally involve inventory methods, visual experience observations as well as semi-conducted interviews. Moreover, the study could also include a wide web-based survey that allows to look further into the conception of infrastructures across the general population. This kind of research

¹ This type of research usually fits in contexts that demand nuances, particularly in terms of the implications that should accompany (or not) the public projects. In this paper, the authors chose to present the project's generic contexts in order to avoid all stakeholders prejudice, including other researchers and public partners involved in this type of research projects.

initiated the will to better understand the role of infrastructures in the living conditions of people. There is no question that this type of study could strike great resonances with the research community interested in the subject.

Generally, the results are oriented to propose a contextual approach on the design front in order to analyze every utility equipment project as a design project at the neighbourhood level and less as an infrastructure and engineering project. Additionally, the design project should seek the compatibility of elements with each other whether it concerns the infrastructure itself (shapes, materials, textures, etc.), the landscape design or the reconciliation of the functionality and the outreach activities around the utilities. On the other hand, it would be appropriate to initiate social perceptions measures and analysis practices to better understand this kind of compatibility before and during the project. In fact, this kind of study demonstrated the importance and complexity of the perceptions' role in the understanding and appreciation of public infrastructures. Thus, this perception is nourished by the appearance as well as its semantics and meaning. Hence, in order to better understand the concerns and answer them across the conception of the infrastructures, it would be advisable to integrate an inquiry methodology to the design projects or even to rely on the efficient sharing of information between the project stakeholders as well as starting targeted communication practices with citizens.

Academic research financed by public funds: green infrastructures

This study was financed by public funds and could be identified as a traditional human sciences research about design projects. The study explored the aesthetic appreciation of extensive green roofs in order to understand more accurately the factors that contribute to their social acceptance. Undertaken by landscape studies, the research pursued a holistic comprehension of the citizens' aesthetic appreciation of their perceived and lived experience in order to give advice to designers for the conception of extensive green roofs and in doing so, encourage their large scale implementation. This approach is in line with empathic design where humans are at the center of design preoccupations. Thus, this project was mainly developed in a culture of landscape design rather than in a culture of landscape planning.

The results of this study were provided by the combined analysis of an in situ experience of extensive green roofs from the cities of Montreal and Quebec, Canada, as well as from semi-directed interviews of participants from the greater Montreal region. In general, the study revealed that the perception of extensive green roofs is positive and its appreciation is greater than for a traditional roof. However, even if the environmental benefits of a green roof were recognized, it seemed useless when a physical or visual access to the roof was not granted. In this perspective, the present study proposes an intervention on roofs that could go beyond its strict greening. In fact, the design of green roofs should encourage our physical presence when possible or at least draw attention to its observation and

contemplation. Otherwise, the costs and efforts needed to implement a green roof could be considered less relevant despite its environmental benefits.



Figure 3 Green infrastructure project: École de cirque extensive green roof, NIP Paysage (Montreal, Canada)

Food for thought

In the following table, the three stages of social innovation by design in public design projects that were earlier presented are reclaimed to apply them to how the evidence-based approach could be effective in the context of these three kinds of research studies. We should mention that there is a significant difference between the objectives of each research and their academic contexts and so, in their public projects' scope. This distinction is put in Table 1 in terms of their different implications. We tried to illustrate the links (or not) between the activity of research solely about design in public projects and the activity of design and public management in itself. In this way, it is possible to distinguish the type of design processes and the studied projects, the type of meaning carried by communities that were studied and the way they are actually introduced (or not) in the design process as well as the challenges brought up by the larger introduction of design in public organizations. Ultimately, this also defines what lessons can be learned through these research projects and what should be linked in regards to public design. We should also discuss more

concretely the design’s role as well as design and public management practices through their current manifestations. In the end, it will enable us to enquire more adequately on the scope of design public practices as well as research lessons in such contexts. In other words, what past experiences in design research allowed to learn and how it can reinforce the design research frame with more evidence-based action.

Table 1 The three stages of social innovation by design in public design projects.

Research context	Thesis	Applied research on public infrastructure for public organization	Academic research financed by public funds on green infrastructures
Public design study elements	Social perceptions and landscape issues. Visual, experiential, social and political data. Design’s role in major projects. Design’s role in political purposes.	Public design project monitoring approach. Social perceptions of a public design project and design’s role in solving the social problem.	Social perceptions of green infrastructures on a wide implantation perspective and of supporting public politics. Social discourses on the ecological benefits of the interventions to orient design projects and public policies.
Academic context	Thesis	Research contract	Public funding
Expected results about evidence-science based design	Design criteria for future projects	Design criteria for specific projects	Design criteria for future projects
Type of design projects and public management issues			
Design in the project process	Design as a mitigation measure more than a strategy for a project. Design as a means to get a project accepted. Design as a limit to professional interventions.	Design as a mitigation measure more than a strategy for a project. Design as a means to get a project accepted. Design as a limit to professional interventions.	Traditional design projects conducted by design firms.
Human experiences generation projects	Expectations in regards to the experience and meaning of an infrastructure as an essential input for future projects.	Expectations in regards to the community and the neighbourhood’s life as an essential input for the project.	Expectations in regards to the experience and meaning of an infrastructure as an essential input for future projects.

Study of the project's organizational structure	Design for discrete problems.	Design for discrete problems.	Design for discrete problems.
General knowledge on public design	Development of a wider intervention framework for design in projects to facilitate the integration of the overall dimensions studied in a project (i.e. spatial, social and political). Results oriented towards design for policy.	Results oriented towards design as a capability. Design as means to get a project socially acceptable.	Social expectations and perceptions in regards to the public politics context. Results oriented towards design for policy.
Design and public management activities			
Public manager's role	Design as a discrete intervention. Little consideration for design as a global and strategic approach.	Design as a discrete intervention. Little consideration for design as a global and strategic approach.	N/A
Designer's role	Creative practices rather than strategic ones. Punctual approaches and out of step with the social concerns studied. Link between research and projects not so conclusive.	Creative practices rather than strategic ones. Punctual approaches and out of step with the social concerns studied. Link between research and projects not so conclusive.	Creative practices rather than strategic ones.

5. Discussion

As a hypothesis for future consideration, this first analysis showed that design in actual public contexts is often used to resolve problems punctually. In fact, it is interesting to observe that this attitude is not only carried out in public management contexts where silo managing is predominant, but also by the designers themselves. In the same way, the integration of an evidence-based approach is as difficult in public management as it is in design projects. As a matter of fact, the applied research is often introduced outside of the realities of design projects, as additional information, even though design usually outlines the studied problematic. Furthermore, research has typically less than hoped for strategic impact on project orientations and in so, cannot implement major changes in design and public management practices. In fact, design intervenes (too) often in mitigation practices, project assessments or criteria recommendations. In other words, design takes action on

more punctual interventions rather than in the framework of the project itself. Therefore, a gap between design practices and public projects seems to exist as well as between knowledge transfer of research data directly in the project. In addition, a discrepancy also appears in the integration of the complex public design issues in both the design process and the public management. The nature of the academic context could explain the gap in some way, but more analysis is needed to conclude that it is the only explanation. However, this review was a first attempt to characterize this gap and it is essential to study more fully the whole process of design, public management and scientific knowledge in public projects as well as their related influences.

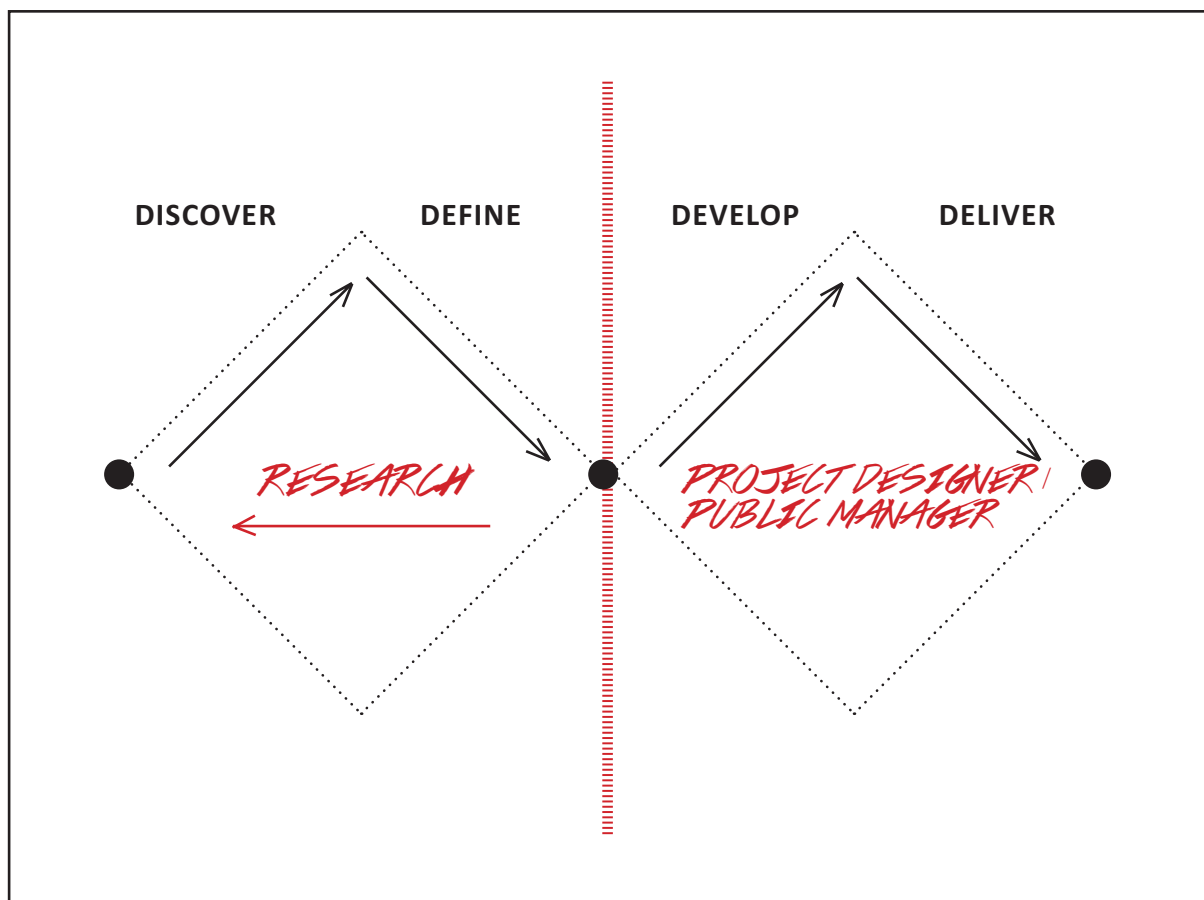


Figure 4 *The big gap: Hitting public designs' wall - Inspired by the «Double diamond diagram» (Design Council, 2013)*

6. Conclusion

Therefore, public design should be investigated more intensely and the necessary reference and action framework should be developed in order to gather the perceptions of designers, managers and researchers to orient practices towards evidence-based projects. The present work on public innovation should benefit from the new paradigm change in management, going from the old public administration, to a new public management and ultimately, towards a new public governance. If public innovation by the new public management

initiated a model inspired by management practices coming from private companies and from marketing, the new public governance should redefine design's role and the collaboration at the heart of public management practices (Sørensen & Torfing, 2012). In the latter, design is more conceived as a strategic practice that could enhance the understanding of the issues related to social concerns in the early stage of a public project. In fact, design research could surely help to orient that kind of design practice. However, these thoughts on public management should be further explored in the light of public project researches and their concerns on common good. Furthermore, some examination should be conducted on the deliberation consultant's role, as a social acceptability oriented practice, in particular research which participates in the early inclusion of citizens' concerns that could orient the design activities (i.e. targeted interviews). In fact, some are questioning the real impact of participatory approaches in public contexts as well as the possible misuses in terms of democracy. In this way, Walker, McQuarrie and Lee (2015) recalled that in:

«[c]omplementing increasingly sophisticated stakeholder management technologies, this type of «designer democracy» has a number of potentially regressive outcomes. Deliberation consultants build public legitimacy for the retrenchment of programs, they enhance the reputational capital of the consultants' clients, and they encourage citizen mobilization focused on short-term, individualized action» (Walker, McQuarrie & Lee, 2015; 17).

Without willingly diminishing public designs' present work, we think that it would be advisable to develop a greater knowledge of these issues as well as different models of design practices in the public context. This initial review of social innovation by design in public contexts brings us to consider the shortcomings of participatory methods, design research methods and design thinking in public action. We think that we should question the public design projects regarding their processes and responsibilities towards their impact in the transformation of public management and their influence on public projects. Moreover, we should investigate how they are integrated to new meanings emerging from public design and how organizations implement these innovating solutions. In other words, we should study more closely public innovation contexts as well as their link to social innovation by design. Thus, there are many and necessary thoughts to have if we want to consolidate this field of activity and its public transformations.

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