COLLECTION

ART+DESIGN \ SOCIOLOGY   # 01

C O L L E C T I O N

La revue *Collection* est une initiative de la Parsons **Paris** School of **Art + Design.**

Revue de recherche internationale en Art & Design, à caractère professionnel, *Collection* veut être un pont entre les théories et les pratiques, entre la recherche fondamentale et les acteurs – les enseignants tout comme les professionnels de l'Art et du Design. Elle cherche à diffuser la recherche et à en faire une synthèse .

Sa double mission est d'aider à définir les territoires de la science du design comme science de la conception et de les rassembler, **autour d'un noyau commun de savoirs académiques et de « best practices ».**

Chaque numéro de la revue porte sur une thématique différente, et sera conçu en collaboration avec deux invités (un chercheur et un designer ou artiste) travaillant ensemble. **Trois fois par an, elle présentera un regard original et pertinent sur les savoirs et les savoir-faire.**

Ce premier numéro s'intéresse aux liens qui existent entre le **design, l'art et la sociologie** : sociologie de l'imaginaire, sociologie de la profession, sociologie des organisations et sociologie du pouvoir. **Activité à vocation sociale, la conception nourrit la sociologie et se nourrit de la sociologie, dans une relation vivante et durable**.

Nous vous invitons, avec le professeur **Michel Maffesoli** (Université de Paris V), le designer **Olivier Peyricot** et le graphiste-concepteur **Olivier Combres**, à découvrir le premier numéro de *Collection*.

Tony Brown,
Directeur Academique Interim

Brigitte Borja de Mozota,
Rédactrice en chef

The journal *Collection* is an initiative of Parsons **Paris** School of **Art + Design.**

A professional journal compiling international research in art and design, *Collection* aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice, linking fundamental research and members of the design community – including teachers and professionals. *Collection* seeks to disseminate research, and to create a synthesis of knowledge relevant to these visual and conceptual practices.

Collection's dual mission is to help define the fields of design science and creative conception, bringing them together around **a common core of academic knowledge, humanities and social sciences, and best practices**.

Each issue of the journal is based on a different theme, and will be conceived in collaboration with **two invited guests (one researcher and one designer). Three times a year, it will present an original and pertinent point of view on how theoretical knowledge can inform practical** *savoir-faire*.

This first issue focuses on the connections that exist between **design and sociology**: the sociology of the imaginary, the sociology of the profession, the sociology of organizations, and the sociology of power. **As activities of a social vocation, art and design nourish – and are nourished by – sociology through a vivacious and enduring relationship.**

Along with Professor **Michel Maffesoli** (Université de Paris V), guest designer **Olivier Peyricot** and artistic director **Olivier Combres**, we invite you to discover *Collection* number one.

Tony Brown,
Interim Academic Director

Brigitte Borja de Mozota,
Rédactrice en chef

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"Don't ask me what "form" is. It is like asking a centipede how it manages walk with so many legs."

W O L F G A N G   K O E P P E N

Towards a Sociological "Formism"

Abstract

Sociology is not the plain sum or generalization of individual behaviours, but the consideration of world complexity and heterogeneity without submitting it to finalization (that means against pretended reality exhaustion by positivist Scientism).

This global vision has to consider our ordinary, temporary, confused everyday life – in one word, everything escapes from a normative worldview; while the trend had often resumed to a transfiguration of the commonplace (in art, literature, philosophy), "appearances" have now to regain their essential place in a global vision.

We will call this new perspective the "ethics of the moment", and it will be conscious about the fundamental organicity between nature and culture, form and content, collective and individual life.

It will be able to marry the "formism" and the "vitalism" in order to create a real comprehensive sociology; Nietzsche already said that the depth appears on the surface, and several of our philosophers and mass or imaginary sociologists (Durkheim, Habermas, Weber, Lukács, Simmel, Friedman, Kant, Durand) pointed the necessity to consider what is "formal" and spectacular (or phenomenological) in our social everyday life.

M I C H E L   M A F F E S O L I

Miry Yun & Alex Mahler

The point should be to avoid a purposing, scientistic, positive and solipsistic attitude, and to goal a real epistemology of the commonplace, starting from a plain transcription of its variety and heterogeneity.

We wish to reach a sceptical pluralism, global and nuanced, and even holistic. It should consider the variances and the fugitive and concrete presences in our everyday life, as well as the invariances in it; consider the possible view of the object as well as its positive reality; finally understand that science cannot exhaust the knowledge about such a various and surprising world, as our everyday life is.

Towards a sociological "Formism"

MICHEL MAFFESOLI

A new approach to daily life requires us to practice an epistemological balancing act.
We simply need to accept that the lability, the motion and imperfection of societal dynamics, require flexible and adaptable instruments of expression. Of course a proposition such as this does not intend to be (indeed, cannot be) hegemonic, it merely refutes the all too-frequent reduction of knowledge to science. It emphasizes that sociology *also* deals with the passions, the non-logic, and the imagination that structure the human activity in which we are players or spectators. That is not begging the question, because gradually, with the establishment of the contemporary technostructure and in order to go with the flow of history, sociologists have adjusted their positions on the dominant utilitarian practice. And by curious mimicry, those who intended to maintain a critical distance began to base their criticisms on the very ideology they were contesting. In fact, to stick to the term's etymology (*contestare*) they were *testifying* on behalf of the very positivist camp they had intended to subvert.

This matter deserves attention for if many aspects at this turn of the century are so saturated with certain theoretical practices, we should be tempted to boldly search alternatives that are better suited for dealing with everyday life. It is important to recognise that positivist science is only one modulation of knowledge. As Habermas[1] remarked, scientism based on 19th century hegemonic claims is not adapted for understanding the contemporary swarm of "communicational" activity that has burst onto us in so many ways.

What we have called the formalism of certain authors has often been misinterpreted. The term itself is ambiguous, since it appears to refer to an abstract attitude, disconnected from the social fact. That is why I suggest using the term "*formism*" when speaking of the frames that brings out the characteristics of societal life without deforming them too much. We know that the largely iconoclastic Western Judeo-Christian tradition has always been wary of image disorder, meaning the expression of the senses. It has frequently had no alternative but to accommodate it, with countless reservations. Thus faced with the cult of the saints and their representations, Catholicism stiffly explained this as being a case of dulia, whereas latria addresses the unique and invisible God who epitomised and perfected the attributes that had unduly been conferred on idols. This movement found its logical conclusion in the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and the baroque of the Counter-reformation period finally proved to be a mere parenthesis that social Catholicism hastened to close after the 19th century.

These were the foundations on which were built the "secular" and theoretical criticisms of form, appearance, and the cultural or political spectacle we have all inherited, or in which we are the lingering protagonists. It is therefore understandable that scholars endeavouring to observe the play of social forms seem paradoxical, or to be bucking the dominant analytical trend. Yet we need to hold on to this very paradox, for increasingly and in numerous ways, that is how both political and daily life are being analysed: as being largely composed of theatricality, superficiality and spectacular ebullience. We need to gauge the importance of this. Perhaps, to borrow Nietzsche, we might say that depth is concealed on the surface of things and people. We tend to forget a truism, namely that form gives rise to being rather than nothing. That constitutes a boundary of course, but one that conditions existence. In Latin *determinatio* is the boundary that marks the limits of a field, but it is that limit that potentially gives rise to life in relation to non-definition, the informality of a boundless desert. Thus things exist because they have form. Creators understand that, when first confronted with form of any kind. Depth will follow. Or rather depth will only be understood if we study form. As philology has demonstrated, even the freest, most unrestrained poetry obeys formal, inseparable and perfectly clear rules.

Similarly social existence is regulated, "locked". I have tried to show elsewhere what these paroxystic situations — anomical violence, state violence or even Dionysian violence — owe to conformity and rules. Perhaps we might even say *a fortiori*, to the banality of everyday life. The rituals forming these situations resemble so many collective choreographies expressing this clash with destiny. That is where banality meets an epistemological project, what *we can know* is what is displayed, what is put into gestures, or staged. We are a long way from the contempt of appearance that is considered good form. I think that using these premises we may correctly appreciate the relevance of sociological "formism". In fact formism is far from being a static view off the world. The classical authors, who used it in one way or another, knew how to take into account the evolutions and forces present in the lives of societies. And in contemporary times, the work of G. Balandier, be it his sociology of Africa or his social anthropology, has revealed the "generative" aspect that structures all societal life[2]. I believe, as I will explain below, that formalism and vitalism are the most reliable focal points around which a comprehensive sociology may be structured.

Indeed, the "frames" we draw up highlight various facets of life and its development. To use an expression of Spengler's, it is a matter of updating the historical "physiognomies" of a few social forms that we constantly find in human destiny. The modulations or digressions of institutions, cultural facts or daily rituals, while precarious, may be credited, *hic et nunc*, with undeniable efficiency for creating this perspective[3]. The mechanisms of belief and illusion, both fragile yet deeply rooted, may find expression there

From everything we know of Durkheim's teaching, what most deserves attention is perhaps his insistence on holism. On numerous occasions he returned to that idea of the specificity of the social fact that cannot be reduced to the generalisation of an individual fact. This shows that sociology can expect nothing from any analysis based on the addition of individual characteristics. Yet the peculiarity of individuals is to care for their inner selves, in all the meanings we may confer on that. From "inner depths" to the awareness (or lack of awareness, which comes to the same thing) not to forget private space, we need to achieve perfection, a completeness that may be measured in relation to the autonomy we achieve. Then autonomous individuals may get together *contractually* for a given action they carry out together, but even here, the important thing is the individual volition that governs common action. To stress the specificity of the all-social is to favour collective form over the individual base. It is to recognise that individual conscience is the product of a whole rather than the reverse. In this respect Durkheim had no hesitation in confirming that "whole properties as determinants of its parts"[4].

Whatever Durkheim's individualistic ideology (or that of the French school of sociology), his one-off holistic remarks lead us to consider the importance of the *structure effect* in societal understanding. In a period such as ours, in which we see the resurgence of organic functions, these remarks are rather topical. One thing is certain, the pre-eminence of the whole over the parts, which various Gestaltist theories have analysed, is present at all moments of this poor quality life that constitutes the major part of the social fabric. An intertwining of existences is expressing itself forcefully over and above, or despite, the individualistic ideologies, shaking erected barriers and various obstacles in its path. There is a kind of drive of the being-together that we can observe empirically and which never misses an opportunity to emerge. Even in the most aseptic areas, those erected by the contemporary technostructure, spaces conceived for gregarious solitude, there will always be a collective re-appropriation that, boldly or slyly, will leave deep traces. Sporting, musical or political events, the sounds and rumours of our cities, and festive occasions of every kind, all forcefully emphasize the pre-eminence of the whole. Increasingly this tends to end up as a confusional reality — what I have called the return of Dionysian values, where the individualistic natures give way to the organicity, the *architectonic* (see Charles Fourier) of the whole.

[1]   Habermas J., *Erkenntnis und Interssee*, Frankfurt, 1968.

[2]   See for instance G. Balandier, *Sens et puissance*, Paris, 1971, p. 9.

[3]   See M. Maffesoli, *Le Rituel et la vie quotidienne comme fondement d'une histoire de vie*, Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, vol. LXIX, 1980, p. 341-349, and *La Conquête du présent*, Paris, P.U.F., 1979, Part 2 « Fondements et formes du rituel ».

[4]   On Durkheim's holism, see *Le Suicide*, Paris, 1973, p. 137, or De la division du travail social, Paris, 1926, p. 342, note 3.

In this last case, gestures dominate, and the imaginary in action where, in elusive and colourful situations, the attractions and repulsions that are formed and unformed owe a great deal more to the polyphony of the senses or affects, than to the calculating and economic vision of reason. As we can see from these few words (possibly prospective ones), what I call "form" is a polypod that has aesthetic, ethical, economic, political and, of course, gnoseological implications. In all cases, it is certain that the civilisations and cultures founded on the individual monad are circumscribed in time and space. Even where they appear to be strong, their domination is permeable and ready to relinquish. Soon, individualism and its correlate, the "depths" or conscience, will only be found in the intellectual, who is possibly the solipsist *par excellence,* if only because it is easier to explain by conceptual reduction than to understand by imaginal dissemination.

It is because this solipsist trend exists, with its strong psychological, or partly philosophical roots, that I believe it necessary to seek everything in our cultural tradition that can serve as a touchstone for exceeding it, if only to draw out reflections from the peaceful tranquillity of preconceived oversimplifications or the arrogance and moralising of pedagogical dogmatisms. Thus by understanding formism in a heuristic way, it can have that capacity to seize the exuberance of social appearance. Not directly, which would be rather pretentious, but cross-functionally, by posing limits, "boundaries". Then, to use an expression of Tönnies, the only real sociological approach would lie in the understanding of "pure forms" and not of singular realities[5]. What can we say, except that by limiting ourselves to understanding structures and their development we allow singular realities to exist, and to be what they are. We do not judge as to whether or not they comply with what we think they "should be", or what we consider would be better than they are, we accept them in their incompleteness, in their partial and fleeting aspect. Thus paradoxically, the formist attitude is respectful of the banality of existence, of the popular productions and miniscule creations that punctuate our everyday lives. It does not confer meaning, or have a religious, political or economic aim, it does not make any categorical imperatives. It is content to speak of its time in its own way and thus forms part of the polyphonic discourse that a society makes of itself. Perhaps that is what has been called the "organic intellectual".

Traditionally, literature from poetry to science fiction via the novel or the theatre, has given itself the function of transforming quotidian banality. Of course there are exceptions, but overall writers have bowed to that demand. The theoretical approach is based on this model, and even pushes it further for the concept does not stand up well to the "more or less", it will have nothing to do with the superfluous. The real can only be something vile to be hastily overtaken, or rather that must be led, depending on the project or programme drawn up in abstract fashion. This transfiguration, which in romantic poetry or fiction has the great advantage of moving the senses, dries up in theory; it wilts like an uprooted plant. By wanting to break or surpass what it sees as an obstacle, namely the world of appearances, theory becomes a mere catalogue of prescriptions when it attempts to reform or revolutionise the latter. In both cases, it is replete with the feelings that characterises the "lifeless" of all kinds. Theory's fear of impure images, its transfiguration fantasies, in short its iconoclasm, leads it to suggest another world in place of the facticity of the present one. If we consider the great schools of thought that have succeeded each other over time, we find this process in the theology that transcended the numerous magical or religious practices, the philosophy that rationalised popular wisdom, the psychology that subsumed empirical knowledge of the body and spirit and, more recently, in the sociology that somewhat haughtily contemplates popular common sense or the integrated know-how that structures all societies.

In all these cases, there is little room for the spontaneous love of life that adorns time and space in images and helps us collectively face the tragedy of passing time and the anguish of finiteness. It is striking that theoretical constructions emerging from the schools of thought we have mentioned, aim to save individuals, ensure their spiritual fulfilment, cure them of their psychological deformities, or better still, integrate them into the social fabric. But the object of these numerous concerns is always the individual monad, for it seems that transformation mechanisms can only impose themselves by addressing isolated individuals. The collective adventure is inverted in the individual adventure, so well described in "Bildungsroman", from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain.* Yet in a mysterious way (but as we know, mystery is what unites the initiated), collective values that function without man's conscience having much to do with it, are what enable civilisation to exist. Of course there is a "Cleopatra's nose", the individuals who channel the chaos, the rage and slippage of history; but those individuals are more acted upon than sovereign. We may not be aware of this structural effect or movement, but they are intuitively felt for what they are. That is perhaps why the masses have been qualified as versatile, indifferent, sceptic, or as I would put it, "quietist" for they "feel" that while charismatic individuals and political power may succeed each another, their actions towards them scarcely change.

Whatever the case, if there is a structural effect, if the individual is ultimately just a somewhat perverse avatar of collective organicity, it is important that we find the means to understand how it is structured. That is where the issue becomes hazardous. This intellectual instrument must not be a new way of programming what must be. Rather it should content itself with a mere *observation function*, in the knowledge that social passions or political agitation, struggles and conflicts, attractions and repulsions, will occur whatever the acuity of vision or accuracy of observation. This instrument will not have to transform, it should merely be fair. The disenchantment with the world that Max Weber spoke of and which had a strong impact on modern and contemporary thought is now in decline. Today we are overhauling the great agglomerative figures that integrate each individual in an endless chain of that sociality for which we are just beginning to reconsider the effects.

Thus what I call "formism" is another way of stating the eternal problem of the Universal and the Singular. Each "ideology" of a given period has to face this problem, which cannot be disregarded by sociology. In this respect, G. Lukács defines the question well in a youthful work (and therefore perhaps in a more open way): "There are two types of psychic reality (*seelische wirlichkeiten*): Life and life. Both are equally real ... since life has existed and men have thought about it and wanted to order it, their experiences have always contained this duality." And although for him this was only an aesthetic category, he stressed that, "it is only in form that both can be experienced at once"[6]. That is an interesting remark especially when we know what Lukács owed to Simmel, who also influenced Max Weber a great deal. It is certainly possible to extrapolate what we allow to artistic creation to all social creation. "Life" and the life, the essence of the being-together and concrete existence, are an inextricable mix and it is useful to understand the various components. In any case, and this is its main advantage, formism is above all a global thought. It is what traditional sociology calls "holism" and which unlike all totalitarian (and monovalent) views, never favours any one element. Faced with scientific and technological development, and given the diversification of means of knowledge, it is more than ever necessary to show the complexity of a world that repeatedly escapes the fantasy of enclosure. Each era has a period of optimistic scientism during which it claims to have found the universal key, or the totalising explanation. The history of ideas will show that no civilisation or culture has avoided this pretension. And in our own tradition, movements such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or positivism, are informative. There is undoubtedly a constant here, a sociological ponderousness.

Perhaps this mechanism has some uses. Indeed, thanks to its oversimplification, such optimism provides a renewed momentum. It strengthens the mobilising myths, and conditions all kinds of discoveries or rediscoveries that structure and determine life in society. But at the same time it is important to stress the relativism of this kind of vision of the world, lest we fall into those mechanistic set-ups that, from the Mandarins or eunuchs of China (see E. Balazcs) to the contemporary technocrats, have conferred legitimacy to quantitative management and social control, and justified the imposition of a techno-bureaucracy with its resulting detrimental impact on basic sociality. Through a perverse effect (what Jules Monnerot calls "heterotic") by becoming increasingly abstract, progressive optimism, scientific Truth, the all-technological, and so on, has only

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deconstructed "that feeling a society has about itself" (Durkheim) which allows the societal whole to endure.

Formism warns against all of that. Indeed, as numerous observers have emphasised, stressing "form" naturally leads to the polytheism of values, it favours movement and takes into account the multitude of such aspects for each element of social life. Thus to describe the "formism" of Simmel — who at the beginning of the 20th century was one of the first sociologists show its advantages — Georges Friedman and Bernard Groethuyzen stated that he reached "a sort of sceptical and very subtle pluralism", which led him to "conceive the set of things." And by opening a path that is especially interesting to the sociology of knowledge, Friedman goes as far as to establish a parallel between that formism and the "refusal to choose", the availability, the freedom of the artist that we find in the amorality of someone like Wilde or Gide[7] . Of course there is no question of going further in this comparison; it is enough to stress its relevance and topicality, since we are attempting to re-evaluate the complexity of the world while rediscovering the importance of the set of differences. Taking forms into account brings out the numerous creations and situations of daily life without enclosing them in the narrow confines of finalism. In this respect, formism is a reaction against rationalist monovalence, it emphasises the polysemy of gesture, the motley aspect of everyday life as opposed to concepts that want to purge, reduce, and reduce the complex to pure brevity[8] . "Spirits are brutal like the pure acts that, in essence, they are," said Paul Valéry's Faust to Mephistopheles. And certainly there is something in rationalism that is both simplistic and brutal, if only in its claim to be exhaustive in everything it does, and of making any object analysed express everything it contains.

The refusal to choose and the aesthetic availability we mentioned are far more respectful of the sensitive aspect of social life, its structural pluralism, in short the irrepressible hedonism that it would be futile to minimise. It is interesting to note that Simmel, while developing an analysis of forms, was the champion of "sociology of meaning"[9] . For him, the essential nature of formism, like the frame in a painting, was to display the colours, the complex architectonics, the intense and banal atmosphere – in short the profound appearance of daily life. There is no vain paradox in combining depth and appearance; others have already done so (Nietzsche). What I would like to emphasise is that most of existence is composed of the *appearing*, which we must admit, is in no way unified, pure or coherent. Over and above the normative conceptions (conservative, reformist or revolutionary) we can grant "appearing" the merit of expressing the density and pluralism of existence in its most banal and visible form. That is precisely what makes social theatricality so effective.

Unlike the "scientific" lesson-givers, we can admit that it is not what a social object is but the way it presents *itself*, that leads our research. All formism's ambitions may be resumed in that. There is no question of any spiritual abdication; it is merely a matter of adjusting the existentialist relativism and pluralism to the intellectual approach. That is a perfectly legitimate practice; close to what V. Pareto called "descriptive theorems" whose aim is not so much to draw up laws as to indicate trends. In this respect, researchers in the pure sciences currently demonstrating the fertility of error, or rediscovering the significance of "successive approximations" are close to the logic of the form we are attempting to describe here.

Each time this becomes topical, we consider the impassable ties that exist between experience and the essence of things, between social experience and the representations that describe it. It is instructive, as I have said, that in one way or another, the main protagonists of emerging sociology all raised the issue of constants, invariances, and archetypes that are so many indicators of current situations. A quotation from Kant will illustrate this: "My place here is the fertile *bathos* [...] of experience [...] and the word transcendental [...] does not signify something passing beyond all experience, but something that indeed precedes it *a priori* but that is *intended simply to make cognition of experience possible*"[10] . He specifies that if these conceptions overstep experience, "their employment is termed transcendent". I am not qualified to carry out an in-depth analysis of this, it is sufficient to stress its interest and the dichotomy between "transcendental" and "transcendent" and, to use Kant's expression, indicate that the only function of the word "transcendental" is to serve as a backdrop or frame on the horizon of what he calls *experience*, which is precisely that day-to-day existence that interests sociologists. In short, the transcendental process is the possible condition for all knowledge of reality.

Such a dichotomy could well be found in sociology. The societal would refer to the essential categories that would also enable us to understand and bring out the minutiae of daily life. Thus the tragic, the theatricality, the ritual and the imaginary would be societal categories. However the social (an expression that can be used in a neutral and acritical fashion) would refer to a representation (clearly dated) of life in society[11] that would tend to cut itself off from everyday life by trying to serve as a prop. In any case, it is important to pay attention to the fact that what I have called the *logic of form* enables us to overcome the rift between intellect and sensitivity, which is the veritable *pons asinorum* of any theoretical thought..

We have quoted Simmel and Pareto, but we must also refer, however briefly, to Max Weber, who also had no compunction about resorting specifically to what I call "formism". There are numerous examples in his works that state this approach in one way or another. We might just look at his definition of "the spirit of capitalism". It is very nuanced and perfectly covers the various elements in our analysis. Thus if this spirit of capitalism exists, it will only be an "historical individual, i.e. a complex of elements associated in historical reality which we unite into a conceptual whole from the standpoint of their cultural significance". The notion of an historical individual, like that of an "ideal type", are only so many empty sets, spaces that may be unreal, in which the value is above all, heuristic. The essential characteristic of such a concept is that it is composed of "those singular elements" that we can observe at a given historical moment. In fact Weber stresses that this is not a "definitive concept" nor possibly a "conceptual definition" but rather a "temporary description" (*veranschaulichung*)[12] .

This caution fits in well with social lability and it is not surprising that it has produced a key corpus of sociological work. Indeed we understand that the established "historical individual" is above all a *foil* for all the singular components of the social fact. At the same time s/he connects the dots between the various elements and thus enables us to draw a portrait of a period. S/he updates the architectonics of representation and practices which the cause and effect of the circulation of goods, of speech and of sex. Thanks to this individual these elements are integrated into configurations that remain sufficiently flexible to avoid the traps of dogmatism and rigid totalitarianisms. The "historic individual" and the "ideal type" rarely meet as such, but we can imagine the assistance they could provide to sociological research. Thanks to them, all the minutiae of everyday life, the trite bar-room conversations, the existentialist wanderings that punctuate everyday life, the countless rituals that structure our days, both in work and leisure, become pregnant with meaning while never forming part of any pre-established finality. Thus we might say of the social fabric what Guardini said of ritual: it is *zwecklos aber sinnvoll*[13] .

What we remember from the various modulations of "form" is really the insistence on the fact that the many situations of daily life wear themselves out in the act itself; they are lived in the present. And it is important that this present, which is the specific domain of sociology, having long been obscured by the Promethean myth, recovers the pre-eminent position it deserves. On pain of becoming (or remaining) a purely abstract representation, sociology must be attentive to this ethic of the instant that so deeply permeates life in our societies, in all its communicational or instrumental activities. Moreover, "formism" (and that is a consequence of what we have said), also insists on the appearing, the appearance, spectacle, image and so on — as many realities as Western tradition has neglected. Indeed, form confers expression on miniscule creation by drawing it out. We should stress that a sociology of the imaginary, whose main aspects have been described by Gilbert Durand, should certainly allow these two trends to develop.

From an epistemological point of view, it could sociologically take on the achievements of phenomenology. Thus the notion of the "imagi-

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[7] Cf. G. Friedman, *La Crise du progrès*, Paris, 1936, p. 138

[8] Since a famous brand of German car put in more concisely ("*Mercedez ein Begriff*"), the designers in advertising agencies have sought concepts that best characterise the product they want to promote. This crude utilitarian practice sheds no light on the essential characteristic of the conceptual process.

[9] Cf. G. Simmel, *Mélanges de philosophie relativiste*, Paris, 1912. Since that was written we should also mention the publication of G. Simmel, *Sociologie et épistémologie*, Paris, 1981.

[10] I. Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, Chicago, Open Court Publishing Co, U.S., 1949, p. 150-151, note 1.

[11] One might situate the apogee in the 19th century, when sociality was channelled, put to work, controlled, and so on. On these definitions and their developments, see M. Maffesoli, *L'Ombre de Dionysos, contribution à une sociologie de l'orgie*, Paris, 1982, p. 13.

[12] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Sprit of Capitalism*, Chapter II: "The Spirit of Capitalism", Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 59 – then p. 91 for the idea of "ideal type".

[13] The German phrase stresses that something may well be "full of sense" but "without purpose".

nal" suggested by H. Corbin and G. Durand should allow us to observe manifestations of the close ties between the intelligible and the sensitive in contemporary daily life[14]. It is useful to remember such basic truisms. Life begins by confining itself, by being determined (as in the Latin *determinatio*), and similarly social existence only exists when it shows itself, when it takes on shape. The *theatrum mundi* is not an empty shell, it has a multiform expression (political, economic, everyday) and that is certainly what confers legitimacy on our sociological reflection on "formism".

Many authors, each in their own way, have sensed this contemporary problem. We can no longer understand the modern world with instruments that were once valid but have now become obsolete. Thus the logics of the "excluded third party", the distinction between subject and object, and the foundations of our sciences, are increasingly being challenged. We might say that attention to form such as I have described it, should enable us to draw up a new social anthropology that is more generous and open to the complexity of the social world. Edgar Morin who, with steadfastness and erudition, endeavoured to draw up the foundations in his *Méthode*, said that, "we need a principle of knowledge that not only respects but reveals the mystery of things". When he attempted to define this method, he specified that it was a "maelstrom movement from phenomenal experience to the paradigms that organise our experience"[15]. All the terms of my analysis of form are to be found here: experience is another way of expressing what I have called empathy, and the paradigm may be understood as modulations of "form". We are a long way from exhausting the richness and polysemy of the chaotic "maelstrom" movement of social existence, in which many will attempt to prove or test themselves.

That this approach attempts to reveal while respecting the social fact in all its complexity. That is why I have compared the more accommodating comprehension with over-rigid explanation. In any case, this constant toing and froing from experience to paradigm, or empathy to formism, clearly shows that an organisation exists — I prefer to say an *organicity* of things and people, of nature and of culture. It is sufficient to outline the contours. In doing so the notion will reveal, it will serve as a developer and confer clarity while leaving the rich diversity of sociality. An intimate relationship connects "formism" and polytheism or, in what concerns us, societal diversity. Given the fragmentation of unidimensional systems of reference under the blows of social practices, it is important that sociologists remain as indifferent (on this subject) to incomprehension as they are to sarcasm, and appreciate, now more than ever, how such polytheism is rooted and effective in everyday life. It is to this goal that the lucidity of a (growing) number of people able to resist the totalitarianism of normative conceptions of the world, is directed.

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"Discovering is the only way of knowing."

GASTON BACHELARD,
Le nouvel esprit scientifique, 1934

A Sociology of the Everyday:
A Hindsight into Sociological Practices
Informing Design

Abstract

FABIO LA ROCCA
& ALICE PEINADO

This article explores recent developments in social theory that have taken experience as the grounding of social knowledge. It specifically deals with sociological analysis that focuses on the "imaginary" nature of everyday reality as a mean to explore the relationship between sociology and design practices.

Taking as its starting point the modern, rationalist paradigm, this article looks at how new approaches have developed – whether in philosophy at large or in the social sciences in particular – to counter research in experimental science to the benefit of a more deductive approach. The article looks at a number of late twentieth-century social scientists that can be of particular use to designers as they frame their design practice.

Sarah de Latte & Georgia Bray Wilson

A Sociology of the Everyday: A Hindsight into Sociological Practices Informing Design

FABIO LA ROCCA & ALICE PEINADO

The sociologist's approach consists in asking questions regarding our surroundings with the aim to develop a scientific understanding of them as well as a given knowledge of the world. This knowledge rests on a variety of social phenomena important for understanding and analyzing everyday reality. As a result, there is a practical need – a growing scientific "belief" – inciting us to grasp the social world; we must see the reality confronting us and present things in order to develop, in Michel Maffesoli's words, "modalities of thinking that are in congruence with our times" (Maffesoli, 2002). Hence the difficulty inherent today in knowing how to approach daily life, develop methodological tools and know what will provide us with insights into the atmosphere of our time.

It is important to recall here Georg Simmel's intuition with respect to sociology. According to Simmel, sociology represents a new methodology, a heuristic principle enabling us to penetrate the phenomena of all social fields. It is precisely this penetration that allows us, in Maffesoli's words, to "present what is rather than represent what should be" (2003 : 18). In fact, it is this presentation of social facts that allows us to understand the importance of the present. We are confronted here with an epistemological stake – one that enables the development of knowledge and hence learning about "what is". This represents a change in perspective enabling the development of a new theoretical approach which accompanies that "which is", in order to grasp the internal dynamic of observable social facts.

Parallel to sociologists, and in their quest to satisfy human needs, designers have been interested in what one could define as the qualitative aspects of human life. Writing in the 1970s, Victor Papanek stated that:

"The economic, psychological, spiritual, social, technological, and intellectual needs of a human being are usually more difficult ... to satisfy than the carefully engineered and manipulated "wants" inculcated by fad and fashion" (Papanek 2004:15).

An understanding of such needs, however, is a key to successful and responsible design. Papanek thus called for designers to pay particular attention to what he defined as the associational aspects inherent to the design approach where psychological and cultural conditionings play a key role. It is such conditionings that predispose us towards or make us reject the values that might be passed on through objects. These associational values, Papanek argued, are not simply psychological in character but are often linked to an individual's culture and are universal within that culture (Ibid:21). An understanding of culture is therefore necessary for design to be effective.

Papanek raised his voice in the 1970s to call for a more responsible design geared towards real human beings. More recently, John Thackara has questioned the role of design in everyday life (Thackara 2005). Who do designers design for? What value is imbued in design? This is a call for a more user-centered design as the one advocated by IDEO's founder Tim Brown. In a recent article published by the Harvard Business Review, Brown argued that:

"Innovation is powered by a thorough understanding through direct observation, of what people want and need in their lives and what they like or dislike about the way particular products are made, packaged, marketed, sold" (Brown 2008:86).

While Brown's call for more humane design is not new, the renewed interest in such questions is. Paradoxically, there would seem to be a realization on the part of designers of the role social research may play with respect to informing the design process itself. This is because the complexity we are increasingly faced with in today's postmodern world has become overwhelming for even the most technologically savvy among us. Yet, as Thackara says, "things may seem out of control – but they are not out of our hands" (Thackara 2005:1). Indeed, Thackara picks up on Papanek's statement – that "design is basic to all human activities – the placing and patterning of any act towards a design goal constitutes a design process" – to argue that design is at the essence of what makes us human (Papanek 2004 cf. Ibid:1).

What Thackara, Brown and others are arguing is that there is a need for qualitative research with respect to how we, as human beings, interact with each other but also invest in our environment and the objects populating it. Brown's call for participant observation is in this sense reminiscent of long-standing approaches to data gathering developed first by anthropologists and today adopted by other disciplines interested in the qualitative apprehension of micro-social phenomena - sociology being a primary example of this trend[1] . In this sense, participant observation becomes a means to enter the arcane world of human needs and wants as represented in actual and prosaic everyday practice. Objects are not neutral. On one level they might be seen as mediating and even concealing the relationships that bind us together. On another level, they are imbued with symbolic value. Here is where the social sciences can help designers apprehend the everyday by providing new and innovative approaches to human praxis.

Recalling the etymological origin of the very term "object", Michel Serre reminds us that this is in and of itself something that has been thrown before us (Serre 2008). In ancient Latin, "objecto" meant "to throw or place in front, oppose, present, expose or deliver"(Ibid). An object is not an inanimate thing, but part of an interactive process that is at its very core cultural and social in essence. Modern social theory, with its forceful separation of what we have come to define as the subjective and objective character of scientific processes in general and social processes in particular, has lost sight of the complex, intimate nature of the relationships binding us to our surroundings. These cannot only be apprehended via theories that stress the rational nature of economic, political or social relationships, but can also be analyzed through the affective and symbolic links we establish with both our animate and inanimate surroundings. Here human praxis is conceived in terms other than strictly rational in the modernist sense of the word. There is an additional dimension informing everyday practices that necessarily involves an understanding of people's beliefs, customs, representations.... such a dimension is constitutive of the very "socialness" of each one among us and harkens back to Maffesoli's call for a sociological approach more in tune with one's time (Maffesoli 2002).

This thought process fosters the development of new experiments which bring about changes in the framework through which we apprehend the world – "natural" changes which are "naturally" found in theory and which might be of particular interest to designers. In his work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution,* Thomas Khun put forth the idea that each era, with its social practices, language, experience of the world and so forth, produces an imaginary structure which he calls a "paradigm" –that is, a vision of the world upon which all theories are based and in which, within each system, these theories make their way in a circular manner from one form to another and hence to a change in paradigm. Within this change process, the current transformations in research practice and the theoretical developments in the domain of knowledge are complementary and mutually influence each other. The changes we are referring to here can be traced back, to a certain extent, to the 1960s and 1970s and the increasing preoccupation with "quality" that informed qualitative research in the social and human sciences at the time.

If we are to give a brief account of the historical evolution of theory, let us remember that within the ambit of the spirit of modernity, Bacon - like Galileo, Descartes and Kant - raised the need to clearly separate mind from society and to produce a form of knowledge that considered nature as the only possible source of information. The Baconian ideal positing man's technical domination of the world is well known. We can cite, in addition, Descartes' characteristically modern discourse on method, aiming at developing rational and authentic societies. Indeed, Cartesian individualism fulfils itself, to a certain extent, in Hobbes' rationalist view of society where Hobbes declares that society is not a collective subject based on knowledge but a known object constructed via the *pactum*[2] .

This modern approach to logic is also embodied in Kant's concept of pure reason, which cannot and should not be conditioned by society. Watier writes: "Pure reason... embodies those principles which are useful for knowing something absolutely *a priori*" (Watier 2002 : 41). A sociological approach that is closer to design will instead value an *a posteriori* understanding, a "sensible reason" leading to a knowledge grounded in empirical reality, rather than *a priori* reason. If we refer back to Simmel's theoretical

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1   The anthropological method of participant observation was popularised by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s. However, it originates with the natural sciences – and in particular the geological sciences in late 19th century Europe.

2   Cf. the chapter « Pensiero e società nell'età moderna », in F. Crespi, Introduzione alla sociologia della conoscenza, Rome, Donzelli, 1988, p. 11-50.

approach mentioned above, social phenomena are perceived as a platform from which one must elaborate a theory that is capable to respond to a given vision of the world.

In line with this perspective and in a very original manner, Maffesoli suggests the implementation of a theory of accompaniment, what he refers to as a *metanoia*, a gentler theoretical approach that gives little importance to the illusion of truth. The metanoiac approach (he who thinks "on the side") is opposed to the paranoiac construction (he who thinks in an "overhanging" manner). According to this holistic approach, *metanoia* stands for "joint" knowledge – one that takes into account the present, the everyday, the world, and which enables us as a result to look at things, in a phenomenological sense, or to return to the essence of things. In Hegel's words, then, to return to the "things themselves". We could also speak here of a phenomenology of perception, such as the one propounded by Merleau-Ponty, and which is opposed to Cartesian philosophy.

It is a well known fact that Descartes states in the *Discourse on Method* that the essence of nature consists of pure thought, and that in order to exist it needs no link to, and is dependent on, no known material thing. The primary goal of this founding father of modern philosophy was to chase away from reality all ambiguity and, consequently, to submit the world to an analytical approach whose only end-goal rested in the recognition of simple, clear and distinct elements. In his own way, Merleau-Ponty attempts to free himself from Cartesian rationality by articulating an experience of the world, a connection with the world that precedes all rational approach to it. He emphasizes the great importance of perception, that is, the need to go back to the perceived world, that everyday world which is immediately given to us. To state it otherwise, Merleu-Ponty stresses the importance of learning all over again how to see the world. Once this is achieved, we are then faced with a vision of the world and the everyday which bases itself on the *here and now*, on the observation of everyday facts. This direct relationship with the world, such an immediate and one could say intuitive understanding of it, is the key to the designer's approach.

In the end, reality is revealed through complex networks where a multiplicity of "observing gazes" mediates our re-

lationship with the world and reality itself. This mediation passes by the senses, thought, mental reconstructions and the imaginary. Through this process, we are thus going to immerge ourselves in the everyday, penetrate the internal reason of being of things. Inspired by Ortega y Gasset, we are going to proceed by applying a ratio-vitalist approach, to be understood here as neglecting nothing with respect to our surroundings. In this manner, as Watier points out, "the scientist as social being has at his disposal a common social know-how originating from his proximity to the social world as any other social individual" (2002, 24). A social world to be taken for granted (Schütz, 2008), which could be understood as a permanent interaction between the various elements of the social environment.

When engaging in this understanding of the world and the everyday, it is also necessary to highlight the famous Simmelian eye, a "sociological perspective" which can be understood as a useful perspective from which to grasp the variations in social phenomena and values. On the one hand, the "sociological value of the eye" (Simmel, 1981) resumes for us an attitude attentive to the changes that affect our everyday and that is the basis for the observation of the social world. On the other hand, we can also equate this value of the eye to a sociology of the senses. Following Sansot, to access sensory intuition means taking into account the "significative residue" – thus defining perception as "that which appears to us and which affects us" (Sansot 1986).

It is through such a reasoning process that it is possible here to "rediscover" the everyday, in order to unveil the hidden essence of daily life (Bégout 2008) and engage in a micro-analysis of everyday "facts". It is a kind of phenomenology of real world life in which a "koinology" establishes itself. According to Bégout, the latter refers to the philosophical analysis of everyday events, a study of common and ordinary things with the aim to capture all daily occurrences (Ibid, 91).

It is clear that being-in-the-world manifests its essence through the diverse aspects of daily life. An analysis which focuses on the present and the everyday is nothing more than a constant updating of existence, of the world as it appears to our eyes: a world in which existence, as Heidegger would say, is "oriented towards the world" or "flows in the direction of the world of life" (1985).

In the end, understanding the everyday entails being aware of places and paying attention to visible experience: a lived experience (*erlebnis*), which brings us back to the efficacy of events, the reality of experience, and the will to power (Nietzsche) that signifies life "that comes to itself".

For Nietzsche, in opposition to Hegel's philosophical historicism, there is meaning only in life. This is a concept that, to a certain extent, might be related to the importance of collective reality for Weber.

To discover is the only way to know, writes Bachelard (Bachelard 1934). How then can we go about concretely discovering how we as individuals engage daily with our environment? What then of a sociological approach to the everyday? How can we inscribe the philosophical and largely theoretical approaches outlined here and which inform current sociological approaches with respect to the practice of designers? Consonant with the distinction outlined above between a more deductive and quantitative as opposed to a more inductive and qualitative approach, sociologists have adopted different theoretical as well as methodological approaches to the analysis of society. We propose here to look briefly at three different theoretical approaches that have sought to reframe the way we analyse the everyday and which we think might be of interest to designers.

First, we shall see how Michel de Certeau explored the playing out of power between a dominant class and its subaltern or subordinate counterparts (Certeau 1990). Here a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic analysis of power struggles is unveiled so as to expose consumers' everyday practices as tactics of resistance. Secondly, we shall look at how Jean Baudrillard analysed the systemic nature of signs through the meaning inscribed in objects whether of a cultural or psychological origin (Baudrillard 1996, 2006). This is a systemic understanding of the way in which meaning might be generated within modern, capitalist societies which allows for consumers' varied practices but inscribes them within a structuralist understanding of the role objects play within such societies. Finally, we shall look at how Bruno Latour adopts a new analytic framework, action-network-theory, to account for the role of objects as full agents within society (Latour 1993, 1994, 2005). Objects emerge as part and parcel of sociological and cultural processes that involve

both human and non-human agents.

Foremost among those thinkers that might hold an interest for designers, de Certeau's multi-disciplinary approach paved the way in the social sciences for a new methodology towards the analysis of everyday practices. De Certeau was himself a historian, a Jesuit by training and vocation, who devoted his life to the study of belief systems and the practices of the everyday. In his seminal work on *The Invention of the Everyday*, de Certeau wrote that his research interests were born "d'une interrogation sur les operations des usagers, supposés voués à la passivité et à la discipline" (de Certeau 1990:XXV). Writing, like Papanek, in the 1970s, de Certeau attempted to develop a new way of "doing" sociology – one that would take in consideration consumers as other than passive subjects. He looked at other ways of investing and inventing the everyday, defined more as "braconnage" than pre-determined, predictable habits. What then do users "do with" products? De Certeau argued that users engage in creative acts, a poetics of creation, largely hidden from view (Ibid: XXVII). The "consumption" of goods by individuals is "rusé, dispersé... s'insinue partout, silencieuse et quasi invisible" (Ibid). It is in the manner in which they make use of goods that individuals invest the field of consumption and mark consumer society.

For de Certeau, consumers are unknown or anonymous producers (Ibid: XLV). Of interest here is the illegible or hidden character of this producing practice for mainstream society. "Dans l'espace technocratiquement bâti, écrit et fonctionnalisé où ils circulent, leurs trajectoires forment des phrases imprévisibles, des "traverses" en partie illisibles. Bien qu'elles soient composées avec les vocabulaires de langues reçues et qu'elles soient soumises à des syntaxes prescrites, elles tracent les ruses d'intérêts autres et de désirs qui ne sont ni déterminés ni captés par les systèmes où elles se développent "(Ibid).

Inscribed in modalities of actions and forms of practice that make use of but subvert mainstream discourse and language, consumers' practices are reminiscent of those of colonized people described in the anthropological literature and raise the issue of whether the subaltern, whether colonized subject or passive consumer, indeed speaks (Spivak 1988).

By analyzing the concrete approaches to cultural production exhibited on the margins of society, de Certeau sought to go beyond analyses of consumer culture that dealt with the production and distribution systems of cultural goods by mapping out consumers' behaviours (de Certeau 1990: 52). He focused instead on the more imaginative use consumers make of these goods. Consonant with similar analyses that were being developed elsewhere, notably within the more sociological approaches to historical analysis developed by British historians like E.P. Thompson or Eric Hobsbawm, Certeau considered these practices as tactics (rather than strategies) used to "detour" the original intended functionality or meaning of objects for personal as well as public purposes (Ibid:60). Hence the difficulty to analyze these practices as these were developed "coup par coup" according to the constraints of the predominant logics of power that framed all possibilities of action within the contexts within which they emerged and/or evolved (Ibid:61).

If de Certeau focused primarily on consumers' actions as evidenced through everyday practices, Baudrillard pushed Marx's analysis of production to develop a new approach to consumption (Miller 1987: 46-49). Baudrillard sought to unmask the mystifying character of consumption in contemporary capitalist society through the analysis of "the oppressive nature of the play of commodities as signs" (Ibid: 48). For Baudrillard, economics and psychology must merge. In *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures,* he wrote that:

"Until now the whole analysis of consumption has been based on *Homo oeconomicus*, rather than *Homo psycho-oeconomicus*. Within the ideological extension of classical political economy, it has been a theory of needs, objects (in the broadest sense) and satisfactions....No theory of consumption is possible at this level" (Baudrillard 2006:76).

Objects do not simply fulfil a function or a need. They respond, Baudrillard tells us, "to something quite different" which he defines as the "social logic or the logic of desire" (Ibid: 77). They satisfy something that goes beyond mere need to encompass desire – and desire, Baudrillard states, "is insatiable because...[it is] based on lack" (Ibid). As such, "the world of objects and needs might thus be seen as a world of generalized hysteria" (Ibid). In our contemporary society of consumption ultimately needs are never satisfied.

Objects, therefore, cannot fulfill either a use or an exchange value in the traditional Marxist sense. They function instead as a system of signs within a cultural system dominated by the production of symbolic exchanges.

Objects are perceived here as both essential elements of consumption and producers of cultural meaning (Woodward 2007:74). In *The system of Objects,* Baudrillard looked at objects within the context of signifying systems (Baudrillard 1996). He married a marxist to a structuralist approach to argue that even if we can classify objects according to a number of criteria such as size, functionality, form, etc., these criteria are numberless (Ibid:3). What then are those "needs other than functional ones" that objects answer to (Ibid:4)? For Baudrillard, these needs are of a "cultural, infra-cultural or trans-cultural" nature and pertain to the everyday immediacy of the objects themselves (Ibid). Objects are part of combinatory elements in a "universal system of sign" (Ibid:63). As such they convey meaning ascribed by their position within this universal system. This exceeds their primary functionality to inscribe itself in a social and psychological matrix. "In its concrete function," Baudrillard argues, "the object solves a practical problem, but in its inessential aspects it resolves a social or psychological conflict" (Ibid: 125).

Within this approach, objects take on an almost sacred character. Ultimately, man, Baudrillard seems to argue, requires more than functionality to thrive because of his social nature: he needs myth, ritual and perhaps even magic.... And "Consumption is governed by a form of magical thinking" where its "blessings ... are experienced as a miracle" (Baudrillard 2006:31). In contemporary consumer society, objects endlessly seek to escape their original functionality in order to partake of a cultural system where lack dominates and abundance is lived as miracle. Similarly to the pre-capitalist Melanesians who engaged in cargo cults to celebrate as well as magically capture Western affluence, today's consumers naturally believe in consumption and the profusion of goods it reveres. Indeed, "in everyday practice, the blessings of consumption are not experienced as resulting from work or from a production process" (Ibid). Consumption takes on a mystical character and modern day consumers are just as mystified as Melanesians awaiting the arrival of the white's

man cargo planes were. Consumption is more about image and display, the underpinnings of desire, than concrete needs.

Baudrillard's analysis of contemporary, consumer society runs counter to an understanding of capitalism as a rational, economic system. Latour's approach differs markedly from Baudrillard, but like him questions the deep seated assumption that our contemporary capitalist, consumer society is founded upon rational decision making based on natural laws. Indeed, Latour's call to question the underlying subject/object distinction proper to modernity since Descartes is not unlike Baudrillard's critique. Latour lobbies for a new methodological approach to the analysis of contemporary society anchored on anthropological practices of research. In his work *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour questions modern scientific theories that distinguish between natural facts and cultural constructs (Latour 1993). He claims that our contemporary, post-modern societies have never been modern and hence cannot be post-modern in character. This is because we can analyse Western societies as "real, social and narrated" – the way anthropologists address Arapesh or Achuar culture (Ibid: 7). For Latour, this calls for a complete rethinking of what "modern" refers to and by extension to how we go about analyzing ourselves. The result is a complex, holistic analytical approach whereby processes rather than structures or even systems prevail. Artifacts, or objects, hold a primary place within this approach.

Latour is interested in objects as new types of hybrids, part nature part culture, brought about by technological advances. "The mistake of the dualist paradigm" that posited a subject/object distinction, Latour writes:

"was its definition of humanity. Even the shape of humans, our very body, is composed in large part of socio-technical negotiations and artifacts. To conceive humanity and technology as polar is to wish away humanity: we are socio-technical animals, and each human interaction is socio-technical" (Latour 1994:64).

For Latour, it is necessary to redefine the way we analyse everyday practices in order to understand how objects act as mediators between ourselves and the world surrounding us. Latour argues that non-human actors, or artifacts, must be included as constitutive, agency bearing elements within social analysis (Ibid:51). This

is because "non-humans also act, displace goals, and contribute to their definition" (Ibid:38). Within this approach, the social no longer constitutes a specific domain to be circumscribed and apprehended. Rather, it is a site for the "re-association and re-assembling" of disparate elements, some human and others not (Latour 2005: 7). Latour's approach is ultimately process bound. This is because he emphasizes the original meaning of the term social as an association of entities (Ibid: 64-65). Agency is multiple and complex – it requires a holistic, analytical approach in order to be fully understood. Latour's approach is highly controversial as it posits that groups, social groups, do not exist and that agency is not only a human prerogative. Rather, he looks at formations and the very process of coming together of both human and non-human agents in the making of society and ultimately culture. "Objectivity and subjectivity," he writes, "are not opposed, they grow together, and they grow irreversibly together" (Latour 1994: 64). The material and human world are in a constant process of translation, crossover, enrollment, mobilization and displacement that is at the core of what makes the collective or society itself.

Latour is both a sociologist and an anthropologist who applies anthropological methods to the study of contemporary, consumer society. While he is primarily interested in technology, his approach opens up new vistas for designers. In her opening text to the catalogue of a recent exhibition on outstanding, innovative artifacts that recently took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curator Paola Antonelli states that "one of designers' most fundamental tasks is to help people deal with change. Designers stand between revolutions and everyday life...." (Antonelli 2008:14). In many respects, she is validating Latour's contention that artifacts, objects, have agency. However, while designers definitely "give life and voice to objects", they also "along the way... manifest our visions and aspirations" (Ibid: 15). It is Baudrillard, not Latour, who pointed to the mystical elements proper to consumer society and the desire embedded in consumer products.

As far back as the 1970s, Papanek underscored the evanescent nature of design, and the fact that "the genuine needs of man" were seldom met to the benefit of dubious desires (Papanek 2004: 15). In Baudrillard's critique, desire definitely emerges as constitutive of contemporary consumer society and culture. However, perhaps closer to

Papanek's wishing to refund design practices, de Certeau argued that man is no dupe and that he plays with the messages and meanings embedded in everyday life (de Certeau 1990). This opens up new possibilities for the future. Today designers are attempting new experiments where users, de Certeau's erstwhile consumers, are part and parcel of the creative process. From co-designing to participatory and ultimately user-centered design, designers today are developing methodologies to capture the eminently social and human nature of the design process by involving us, the end users, in the development of new products and services. Are these then new "networks" in the making, new associations leading to a redefinition of the social? Society, as Simmel reminds us, is forever changing and requires a certain sociological gaze (Simmel 1981). As mentioned above, this is a vision of the world, of everyday occurrences, basing itself on the here and now, the situations we encounter daily or the multiple interactions that make up the social environment (Schütz 2008).

In the end, it is a question of engaging in an analytical approach that, to use an expression coined by Michel Foucault (2001), characterizes itself by an "ontology of current events" that will determine our understanding of and the way we look at the world as it is. This entails an attentive glance at the present, the everyday, the esthetic forms of social life – which furthermore is in perfect analogy with design's creative approach which presuppose that one is constantly "in touch" with one's environment. One must establish, therefore, a direct relationship – a sort of empathy with one's context – or concentrate oneself, to use an expression by Ortega y Gasset, on the "atmospheric imperative", the esthetic ambiance that characterizes our world. This path should be explored in order to bring out the full vitality of daily life, so as to bring out a "feeling" that is in congruence with the lived experience in the *hic et nunc* of contemporary society.

TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH PARTS
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Image, Imagination and Sociology: a Methodological Survey

VALENTINA GRASSI

Abstract

Methodo-logy as discourse on method, means here the one we will undertake on the methods to use in various domains but also, more broadly, on the path to follow (in ancient Greek methodos means research, or the search for a way) when studying a subject, a behaviour or a phenomenon from the point of view of the imaginary. As an open perspective, the interdisciplinary – or post-disciplinary – nature of the imagination makes it potentially applicable to several fields of scientific and economic research, as well as to professional situations and teaching. Research techniques aiming to understand the imagination, may be applied to numerous domains, from marketing and market research, to early teaching and adult education. If, in market dynamics, we attempt to construct an affective dynamic that does not exist in what we call reality, research on the imagination could well reveal the stages in the construction, aspects of its impact on various audiences, and the imaginary worlds that are conjured up. The goal might well be commercial in addition to the pure knowledge acquisition, since a whole consumer universe is built around that, and the merchant economy is founded on the invisible and the emotional.

Lisa Cohn

How should we deny that aspect of creative consumption, or the emotive power of commodities?

Image, Imagination and Sociology: a Methodological Survey

VALENTINA GRASSI

Introduction

Methodo-logy as *discourse* on *method*, means here the one we will undertake on the methods to use in various domains but also, more broadly, on the path to follow (in ancient Greek *methodos* means research, or the search for a way) when studying a subject, a behaviour or a phenomenon from the point of view of the imaginary.

1. Contextual Immersion and Knowledge

In research, immersion is one of the fundamental stages for "feeling", or "sniffing out" an imaginary domain that can be very close to the researcher's own world and yet at the same time be very distant and unknown. In this case a shift of viewpoint is desirable, a change of perspective to enable us to see how *we can always live differently*. Ultimately all totalizing thought runs the risk of erecting a symbolic universe that encloses reflection and research within disciplinary borders and rigid identities. Immersion into the imagination requires an empathic aptitude that will bring the researchers closer to the imaginal world they have glimpsed. The emotional and creative experience of the researcher therefore takes on a leading role, for it is true that every act of *comprehension* is also one of *construction* of meaning; the hermeneutic aspect is always inductive.

When we work on the imaginary, the methodological route we take is largely dictated by the terrain and the subject in question, which guides the observer's view and work in all cases. That is why the observer must be flexible and open to the situation, with the curiosity of someone constantly discovering a new world. The *intuitionalism* so often challenged by critics, is not a methodological risk. It is a matter of using the least false words possible (Maffesoli) on a flexible subject such as imaginal worlds, those worlds of possibility where all intuition may bring us to that *nebulous* zone of deep semantic fields.

The imaginary aspect has a global influence on the preparatory phase of a field project, on the establishment of hypotheses and methodological choices. It has a major, fundamental impact since it provides a view of the social that includes every comprehensive element in the research. We need to access the type of *contextual* knowledge that Michel Maffesoli calls *dontologie*: a knowledge that is fully aware of being contextually situated, not in the sense of sterile radical relativism, but rather as an attentive attitude in relation to a given context with its own characteristics, one that we must look at and listen to as though for very first time. The possibility of generalisation only comes later, and concerns deeper levels of archetypes. At first contact, the connection with the atmosphere must be empathetic to the context, which is why we speak of "sniffing out". There must be a compatibility with the milieu and the emotional flows that confer their properties onto it.

While society's capacity to produce artificial images has developed to the extent that we speak of a "video explosion" (Gilbert Durand), traditional research instruments have shown their limitations for understanding these complex phenomena. What we can do, is to accept that whenever we speak of the imagination, we always do so with a margin of rationality that intervenes when we compose our account, be it "fictional" or "scientific", admitting that there is a difference between the two. Edgar Morin wrote of the two kinds of thought *mythos* and *logos*, emphasising that these were also two methods of action. These entirely complementary types of thought have been radically disconnected in the West as a result of Newtonian physics, but they continue to be interconnected in the everyday life of the subject and society because they are not external to each other but form a *uni-duality*. When we formulate arguments, discourse and even scientific theories, we situate ourselves, at least partially, in the rational field, but we can try to trace the contours of the symbolic and mythical field from a theoretical and methodological viewpoint, notably by practicing a certain nomadism between disciplines and frontiers of thought.

2. Interdisciplinarity and Empathy

As an open perspective, the interdisciplinary—or post-disciplinary—nature of the imagination makes it potentially applicable to several fields of scientific and economic research, as well as to professional situations and teaching. Research techniques aiming to understand the imagination, may be applied to numerous domains, from marketing and market research, to early teaching and adult education. If, in market dynamics, we attempt to construct an *affective* dynamic that does not exist in what we call reality, research on the imagination could well reveal the stages in the construction, aspects of its impact on various audiences, and the imaginary worlds that are conjured up. The goal might well be commercial in addition to the pure knowledge acquisition, since a whole consumer universe is built around that, and the merchant economy is founded on the invisible and the emotional. We cannot deny that aspect of creative consumption, or the emotive power of commodities. The risks are obvious at all levels if we leave the field clear to those who, meeting no intellectual resistance, exploit the relationship of the imaginary to collective dreams when that imaginary remains a prisoner to its own denial. That is why training the imagination has such an important role for children as for adults, from school to adult training programmes. A balanced and dynamic relationship with the deeper emotional layers of the world, even its darker, and violent aspects, provides access to that synchronic state that liberates all our creative potential for survival during the *cyclical temporality between life and death*.

The imaginary is therefore a matter of social empathy, which unfortunately bears no relation to traditional science whose origins are marked by the influence of instrumental rationality. The imaginal nature of a social phenomenon is propagated over time and in space, escaping from traditional categories of modern physics, leaving the researcher with the difficulty of studying emergence in a way that is in itself an attempt at immersion into the depths of one's being though empathy.

For Durand, a symbol is the meeting between symboliser and symbolised, both being the result of a natural union that is determined by such an emotive charge, that the emotional complexity of the senses can only be expressed by using that constellation of symbols. Symbolic thought is precisely that kind of journey of association, whereby the symboliser refers to the complex of symbols without ever exhausting the worlds that are conjured up. At the level of human relations the process of understanding the affective worlds of others, even if they are not like our own, is called empathy (*Einfühlung*). Empathetic relations lead to a kind of comprehension of the emotive state of the other that is not sympathy but is more instinctive and calls on a cognitive understanding of emotional states. It is a way of *putting oneself in the place of others* using an imagination that recreates a proven affect in our brain. It is not a case of mistaking oneself for that person, or of loving or hating them—or the situation, phenomenon, or social issue—but rather of understanding their emotional aspects. If, in addition, we feel close to the subjects of empathy, if we like them and they arouse our sympathy, so much the better, for it is preferable to work with a subject we like, albeit while maintaining sufficient distance to prevent ourselves from identifying entirely with them. This is the eternal balance between *commitment* and *distance*[1].

The interaction between interviewer and respondent in fieldwork implies trust and empathy, especially in the case of "deeper" matters, such as the imagination. This interaction is based on mutual trust, which cannot of course be imposed but demands that a certain atmosphere be created. The feeling of being understood creates an invisible link. That is the real difficulty of research into subjective imagination. An interview situation cannot be projected or organised since it has all the unfathomable characteristics of any human interaction. Successful empathetic interaction by the interviewer can install an atmosphere of mutual comprehension that makes it pleasant for people to talk about themselves, even to the depths of their imagination. This empathetic attitude is natural and partly acquired but there remains a certain margin of unpredictability, as in all human exchange. If that mood is not installed, and the relationship between the two fails to achieve that opening up of spirit and soul, then contact has not been successful and it will be impossible to discern the signified of the respondent's personal worlds.

The empathetic relationship requires a situation in which the two subjects are on the same

1   N. Elias, *Engagement et distanciation. Contribution à une sociologie de la connaissance*, Paris, Fayard, 1993.

level, while guarding against total emotional confusion. Maintaining the correct distance is a balancing act that requires juggling participation and distance, recognition and external vision, without any existential confusion but nevertheless sticking to the spirit of what Rimbaud famously called "*Je est un autre*" (I is another).

A leading role in this meaningful interaction is played by *body language.* The mood of is also installed as a result of the opening "signals" and the trust transmitted by the body language that forms part of our communicational exposure.

3. Experience and Form

It is the fundamental role of *experience* in human knowledge that makes any analysis of the imagination such a complex matter. As G. Bachelard has said,

"The Cartesian method, so successful in explaining the world, does not succeed in *complicating* experience, which is the true function of *objective research*"[2] .

Experience not only encompasses that of people in their everyday lives, but that of social researchers in a human environment. A characteristic of research as a form of experience, is to complicate and not to reduce, by being aware that phenomena, especially social ones, are never simple or determined in mono-causal fashion. Pure thought and experience will only correspond in an aseptic laboratory (free from any human intervention) but social research can only be carried out in a human situation. Clearly experience is the basic nucleus connecting thought, human knowledge and research in the field. From the research point of view, we need to bring thought as close as possible to the complexity of the experience. The schizoid attitude that uses polemical antithesis as the principal explanatory logic (G. Durand) does not work in the field, notably when dealing with the symbolic. We therefore need to find an alternative methodological route. To use a somewhat extreme metaphor, between the absolute transcendence of Idea and the radical relativism of the idea, there are many intermediary degrees in which we may situate our hypothesis of a methodological approach to social imagination. Human knowledge necessarily transits through perceptible experience. This implies

that sociological comprehension, attentive to the different aspects of the social subject's relationship to the world, cannot avoid raising questions on the epistemological use of the experience, while being aware that inevitably there will be a margin of incomprehensible *complexity*, in the full meaning of the word.

It is possible to envisage a link between an approach that studies the essence of things, in its archetypal persistent nature, and a comprehensive approach that is attentive to the changing development of *forms*, which the modulations of social issues acquire in their multiple movements. A systemic look at the phenomenon as a whole, perceived as a totality, does justice to *total social facts* (Mauss) and especially to the *contradictorial logic* (G. Durand) at work in the emotional labyrinth of social life, where the subjects' actions are at one and the same time positive and negative, black and white, rational and passionate. Opening up to the polyphony of experience can lead to various specific studies, all of which are part of that great sketch of reality that we can only fill in with intuition. Maffesoli has stressed the incomplete aspect of all *sociological input*.

"Input from any object (the city, relationships, solidarity, etc.) is therefore always incomplete and exploratory; we will never cease to explore the life we live."[3]

Accepting that state of incompleteness gives us the opportunity to consider the impossible as possible. We will not attain the truth about an object (which is in any case neither absolute, nor definitive) but we can get closer to the infinite complexity of a polyphonic reality. As Max Weber wrote:

"We would never have attained the possible if we had not always and ceaselessly targeted the impossible"[4] .

In this perspective, establishing a hypothetical methodological table of the imaginary could lead the way to finding a correspondence among various studies, and notably to provide some leads for future research. We need to understand the social significance conferred on experiences, in their imaginal power, as well as to update the imaginary in fiction, or do *both at once*. We could draw a connection between imagination theories, rich in issues and suggestions, and sociological research,

which is becoming increasingly varied as contemporary society grows more complex. A social group is only formed by the history it relates, which we could grasp through the life stories of its members, for instance[5].

We might say that this is a case of demonstrating from interviews and by the imaginary gleaned from creative works, how each individual only exists in relation to the history of the group to which s/he belongs. Everything that an individual says is inscribed in the group history, which is an account, an imaginary product. The feeling of belonging cannot be reduced to material or instrumental issues. There is always an aura (W. Benjamin) that envelops the group and provides the subject with a *raison d'être*. The imaginary therefore allows the group to endure, and there is a deep connection between the subjective imaginary and that of the group. There lie the secret *synchronies*.

That is the framework in which the sociology of the imaginary has its place in an interpretive paradigm that endeavours to understand a human phenomenon in all its many facets and growing complexity. The shaping of perceptible experience is a social process that creates meaning by sharing that very act of a multi-sensory experience. In their relationship with the subject/object of their fieldwork, researchers attentive to the social aspect of that shaping process will reproduce the daily circumstances of that meaning-producing process. The researcher will also empathise with a given emotional situation, retracing how the past emotion was formed. We may consider that to be an individual, solitary act, but it is really one of constant sharing with the other, since the meeting between experience and form always occurs in view of the other, or at least that other kept within oneself. Thus the work of the researcher is always social and occurs in view of others, whether the subject under study, the community of colleagues, or the image of the great Other that we keep within ourselves. The task of sociology of the imaginary is to show that the social world, with its institutionalised elements, is the emergence of this experience derived from the need to confer a shape to what we feel. It is a work of weaving an impassable tie between the visible and the invisible, between the magma of desire and the form that it takes, or even its institutionalisation, sometimes revealed in its stage of mature accomplishment, but more often in its nascent state. That should not prevent researchers from providing intuitive leads for study resulting from the experience of

the world they acquire when they relate it to institutionalised society and one that is in the process of becoming so.

Emotional experience that cannot find shape is a kind of image that imprisons people and makes them neurotic and psychotic, since the magmatic flow of affect cannot express itself and incubates in a state of powerlessness.

There may well be a certain mistrust or fear of opening that black box to reveal the *utopian* nature of the image of the rational and controlled individual. That too, is a kind of social neurosis that also belongs to the intellectual milieu, and makes people strangers to themselves, even to parts of themselves, such as the body or dreams, nightlife or violence, what Maffesoli has called *the dark part*. The same holds true for the social aspect. Society, and those who seem (rightly or wrongly) entitled to issue opinions on it, often appear to be detached from those dark aspects, even though these are part of their own identities. We need to include those aspects if we are to understand them.

The sociological interview situation, just to use one example of the possible techniques, is the act that consists of drawing out the shape that the emotions have taken, and which acquire meaning in the course of the interview. It is a labour of comprehension and production of meaning. The framework of a given situation will distinguish a psychoanalytic interview for a therapeutic end from a sociological one for research purposes. The very fluid border between the two is determined by the expectations of the actors involved, both interviewer and interviewee. Continually prompting speech is beneficial to this *shaping* that emotions require in order to exist. The interviewer should prefer free association in speech for reconstructing the activities of all the actors by interaction. This is meaning produced through association. Similarly, with image-producing thought, that is exactly the reconstruction and production of meaning we carry out in our interpretation, which is a creative act in itself. That is what Bachelard's *instaurative hermeneutics* are about. The meaning given to a symbolic image is never as definitive as one might think from a rationalising point of view. The very moment we confer a meaning we create meaning, without there ever having an ultimate and definitive interpretation of the reality for which we are constructing the meaning.

2   G. Bachelard, *Le nouvel esprit scientifique*, Paris, PUF, 1983, p. 142.

3   M. Maffesoli, "Conflits, dynamique collective et sociologie de la connaissance", in *Sociologie de la connaissance,* edited by Jean Duvignaud, Paris, Payot, 1979.

4   M. Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, Paris, Plon, 1959, p. 200.

5   F. Ferrarotti, *Histoire et histoires de vie,* Paris, Librairie des Méridiens, 1983.

4. Life Histories

The only "rule" if one might call it that, is to go to the human source of experience as recounted in life histories. These are gathered by researchers who try to respect their sense-producing nature and treat the histories as they would a written text, like the *fabric* of experiences, which, at the very moment they are related are also being re-created. We need to give some space to experience as an emotionally charged imaginary life. Experience as text and text as fabric, a fabric of experiences, and among these, to give priority to hopes and dreams. A trajectory through biographical accounts is one of the most sophisticated tools for accessing the individual and collective imagination. For the biographic approach not only provides access to the personal imagination, but to the collective imagination as well. The collective imagination is a catchment area for individual imaginations, a vast basin in which the personal imaginations that form part of the great collective myths are immersed.

Through these life histories, the aim of social research is to show the gap between the great social imaginaries and the subjective ones, between the great mythical narratives and the subjective ones as expressions of desires, utopic pulsations and deep frustration. If researchers succeed in establishing that relationship of trust with their respondents that enables them to reveal the deeper layers of their own attribution of meaning, they will attain the deepest level of the subjective imagination. At this level it is possible to work with the text/account of the life history and identify crucial moments and discontinuities in relation to the account itself, and analyse the dreamlike aspects of the crises, the "critical" domains. Here, morphological description is not enough, we need to find the moments of maximal criticality so that we may question the meaning that we have conferred on it all, and what form (both positive and negative) the traumatic experiences have acquired in the subjects' biographical trajectories. Clearly the imagination here has both an epiphanic and redemptive function. It is both the poietic form and the auto-poietic form of the construction of a meaningful world. That is where the attentive researcher should be heading in order to highlight the disparate moments of this on-going construction process. Anyone gathering life histories for the purpose of understanding an imaginary must reach a very deep level of factual data but above all, of "unreal" data: the day-dreams, dreams desires and fears. They must forget cold, university "scholarship" and enter a world that is first and foremost human. They must not learn in the restrictive sense of the word, but forget, so as to free their own depths to find emotional connections with people. Only on that level, with the emotional involvement that empathy requires, can research be lived as participation in the human experience.

This type of work therefore requires a long-term deployment of personal and internal resources and, like any human relationship, is subject to failure. But failure too can be rich for what we learn about human situations as lived by the respondents but that cannot yet be expressed in words. We are obliged to use metaphors and allusions to provide a voice for what is attempting to be *established*, at the risk of not corresponding to traditionally established criteria. That is a risk we must take if we want to listen to the voice of society during the shaping process of its imaginary.

While it is true that the only possible access to symbolic thought is symbolic thought itself, researchers must express all their memorised emotional experience, to get as close as possible to the fluctuating world of the imaginal. To do so, they need different instruments from those used in traditional fieldwork, typified by cold statistical surveys. Researchers have to mobilise and even cultivate the use of *emotional intelligence* with the subjects they are listening to as well the texts they have studied.   6

"The fact that the meaning [of an action] does not necessarily need to be a conscious one, allows for the conceptualisation of an action that is not founded on the rational legibility of a behaviour. Therefore the attribution of meaning by sociologists is what becomes both the problem and the solution: they need to enrich the palette of tools they use when carrying out their work with a sensitivity to the aesthetic and proxemic concerns"[7] .   7

Researchers therefore must to acquire a capacity for listening to what is being presented to them, be these persons, texts, situations, or *correspondences*. And it is that creative potential for finding similarities, first with their own emotional experience, and then with atmospheres of intellectual, social and physical experiences, that will bring them closer to the meaning of images.

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7   F. D'Andrea, "Ragione sensibile e azione estetica", in A. De Simone, F. D'Andrea, C. Portioli, *Oltre l'immagine. Transiti contemporanei tra arti e filosofie*, Lecce, Milella, 2004, pp. 408-409.

Understanding Usages in Order to Create Innovative Products or Services:
From the Methods of the Sociologist to the Practices of the Designer

MAGDALENA JARVIN
& INGA TREITLER

Abstract

The success of a new product or service depends on a multitude of factors, including its novelty within a preexisting frame of reference. To identify this frame of reference in the early stages of a project, it is necessary to work closely with targeted users in order to understand their practices 'from the inside.' However, the one who observes them is imprinted with a history, a set of tastes, and a value system that are his own. To better understand the meaning that the Other confers upon objects and their uses, it is essential to be conscious of one's own interpretations so as to avoid projecting them upon another. Comprehensive sociology has developed a set of techniques with this in mind, which can be transposed to other disciplines, such as design. The co-authorship of this article is a direct application of these techniques, since the writers have developed their sensibilities in distinct cultural and linguistic contexts, with the reciprocal biases of interpretation that this implies.

Lisa Cohn

Understanding Usages in Order to Create Innovative Products or Services: From the Methods of the Sociologist to the Practices of the Designer

MAGDALENA JARVIN & INGA TREITLER

Introduction – by Inga Treitler

On June 7, 2009, a package arrives at my door in Knoxville Tennessee, via United States Postal Service. It's from Magda and it contains a book – *Motels*[1] – documentation of a road trip. As I open the package, my two children peer over my shoulder with curiosity! They see me catch my breath as I flip the pages of the book. I tell them, this is my friend's book – she came to the States from France two years ago, and she drove all the way from Boston to Las Vegas, staying in motels along the way. This book is the story of that trip, I tell them as we squint down at the tiny black and white pictures illustrating each chapter. And the kids, teenagers both, are charmed. Why? It's because they have seen their share of American motels, and stayed in a few. You see, we live at the great crossroads of route I-40 (major east–west highway) and I-75 (major north–south highway) in the south eastern part of the United States, making our town of Knoxville a center for truckers, and travelers of all kinds driving these American highways. My kids know that motels have made possible what America has become today – a mobile society that moves goods and people at a rate and with historic significance that rivals the silk roads of the Far East. And yet even while these goods and people are "hitting the roads" of the North American continent, they have remained remarkably impervious, especially in the heartlands, to the influences of other continents and other peoples, as we are reminded when we open the book to "Roanoke Virginia." A customer striking up conversation with Magda asks if she hitch hiked from Europe and he is doubtful when the cook tries to explain to him that there is a vast ocean between Paris and Roanoke. We know about this kind of imperviousness to the world outside because Knoxville is sort of similar. But through our eyes, in the mundane existence it is hard to find provincialism interesting, because we experience it as damaging. So in read-

ing *Motels* I let that judgment go. I look through Magda's eyes. My kids and I are curious to see what else bubbles to the surface from the experience of this quintessentially American phenomenon, the motel, dotting the wide open spaces of America. What is *noticed* about American culture thanks to the lens of an adventuresome "glaneuse" from Europe? The beds. The beds are so wide in Magda's motel that you can't touch the edges even if you flail your arms out to the sides. What does that tell us? It tells us both that America builds commerce on wide open spaces and at the same time, presumably, that space can not be taken for granted in all places. At its simplest – *noticing* the space means it is noteworthy because it is surprising or it is counterintuitive and revealing of our very own assumptions. In a nutshell that noticing is the essence of good ethnography and the open mind on the open road.

I pen these introductory words using a voice I share with my teenaged children to let the reader in on the personal situations of cultural complexity that Magda and I have in common – to show the kind of naïve or fresh excitement that one can have in seeing one's taken for granted world through the eyes of someone who really "notices" things that we only "see." Children of multicultural reach are emblems of ethnographic process. Each of us was born in one culture and raised in another. We are our own test tubes of cultural reflexivity and we've turned our respective curiosities about ourselves onto peoples of the world who are "other."

A week after the book arrived, amidst a flurry of crazed last minute preparations, I hop a plane to Amsterdam to spend the next two weeks "on the road from Amsterdam to Munich." For me the journey is not a personal one but a professional one. I have been invited by a client specifically because I was not raised and immersed in the cultures I am to observe. It is my lens that allows me to "notice" things that are not seen by those at home because they are so natural. And so I see that electrical power comes from a source that we can see on the landscapes : the windmills, both majestically shiny and "postcard" romantic. I notice that schools are public, not paid for by parents but by taxes. I see more different ways of transporting things by bicycle than I thought possible. And I

find parks tucked into every conceivable corner of the cities that I visit on my road trip. And as I begin my journey, Magda begins yet another road trip of her own – the "Cowboys and Angels" journey neatly blogged under that name[2]. Now we find our planes metaphorically crossing flight paths over the Atlantic.

"Voilà," I think to myself. We are birds of a feather... migrating in search of deeper feelings about people and places that are not "of us." As noted by collection's editor Francis de Chassey, in the front pages of *Motels*, if what you are looking for is the museums, the famous people, popular places, go to a travel guide or the Internet. That is because a place, a person, or a thing that is formally designated as "important" is already, in a sense, defined and interpreted. The phenomenology exists, and is no longer there for us to explore independently. So go off road, or in homes to see why people do what they do.

But as a professional rather than a personal researcher, one is perhaps less reflexive. Is this as it should be? One insinuates oneself less in the research site, precisely because we are there to observe, unobserved, in as much as is possible. But after the primary method of anthropology, participant observation requires a role in interaction with the research participant. Naturally there is no such thing. We are in a research site as an ethnographer, precisely because we are different, so people want to know. And they want to understand what in the world drives us to enter the inner reaches of people's lives only to innovate on products and services for the commercial world. I take up a final review of these words having just returned from a second trip to the Netherlands where as I met people and built "rapport" over time, they named me an "ambassador" on a cultural exchange of sorts. From me, they said, they learned as much as I learned from them. So I pose the question for the sake of the paying client and for the sake of readers who are seeking new ways of understanding our sociological and anthropological methods to apply them to innovation in products and services... should we create reflexive moments in our engagements to a greater degree? Should our participants know about us? Should, as one anthropologist quipped recently, should we hug our participants?

Understanding Meaning – by Magdalena Jarvin

Ordinary man has a lot to teach us; he is the depository of an infinite knowledge. Is it still necessary to succeed in understanding what he really thinks and does? To do this, it is clear that we must not only speak to him and listen to him, but we must also observe him. A discourse around a practice remains only a mental and verbal construction, while actions, which are not always consciously made, can translate a universe of values and representations, or create systems organizing objects and individuals into categories: good and bad, authorized and proscribed, sacred and profane (Douglas, 1966).

After all, we are human beings working on human beings, so shouldn't understanding be spontaneous? Nothing is less sure, for two reasons: on the one hand, because the simple fact of observing an individual and asking him questions can be fraught with bias – neutral observation without influence does not exist; on the other hand, because each individual has his own story, his experiences and judgements which distinguish him from others, beyond their common existence in the same society at a given moment. The point of view that we bring is filtered by an ingrained mesh of values and representations. In order to understand the Other, without projecting one's individual certainties and perceptions upon him or her, it is therefore necessary to be conscious of one's own frame of reference. Bourdieu would suggest that sociologists, as psychologists do before opening their practice, should begin by doing their own socio–analysis: in what milieu did I grow up, what values have been instilled in me, what is my definition of "desirable" and what would I do better to avoid? This introspective exercise, called *reflexivity* by sociologists, (Strauss, 1992), is a methodological starting point consistant with applying to oneself and to one's work the tools of analysis habitually used to explain the behavior of the "good savages" who are the Others. The assumption is that it is only when one has identified one's own perceptions and judgements that one can attempt to really listen to and understand the Other. It is for this reason that we must put into place certain techniques which help us to break with common meaning and achieve a process of objectification.

1   Jarvin, M (2008), *Motels. Sur la route de Boston à Las Vegas*, Paris, l'Harmattan, collection Errances Anthropologiques.

2   http://cowboysangels–docteur–m.blogspot.com/

For the designer wishing to improve an existing product or invent a new one, this detour via comprehension seems equally indispensable. For he who wishes to innovate must already understand what already exists. In order for a novelty to be adopted, it must in fact take for reference a previous artefact; there is no creation *ex nihilo*. Nevertheless, even if this correspondence between old and new is real, it provides no guarantee as to the success of the product in the marketplace. Again, it is necessary for the public to adopt it, integrate it into existing practises and habits, and re–adjust the new in function with the old. And again, the novelty must make sense in the context in which it is trying to exist. Thus, the portable music player could have only known such success in a culture that values certain forms of individuality (to want to listen to one's *own* music), mobility (to not be constrained by a wire connecting to an outlet), miniaturization (allowing it to be be taken everywhere), and the multifunctional (MP3 and radio).

It is therefore all about finding meaning; the meaning that an individual gives to his practice, and the meaning that the professional (sociologist, designer, or other) in turn attributes to it. Facts and gestures are always inscribed in logics of action, and to understand them one must seek the root of the various agents' choices, understand which rationales are at work, and the reasons behind these actions. This is the postulate of the so–called "comprehensive" approach (Kaufmann, 1996).

An Application in Real Time – by Magdalena Jarvin

When, after having read my description of my travels in the United States, Inga exclaims spontaneously "You only see the signs!" she summarizes perfectly the subject of this article. In her eyes, my view of her country is concentrated on details bordering on the insignificant. How, she asks me, did you not see that was *really* happening? But this "really" is precisely what makes the difference between two individuals, who, moreover, come from two distinct cultures. What seemed primordial for Inga had seemed anecdotal to me. We did not grow up in the same country, we were not raised following the same codes, we do not have the same understanding of today's society; faced with the same event, situation, interaction, we do not apply the same rules in our reading of it. She who is immersed in the culture sees the signification, while she who sees things as a novice only sees the signs. Even though it is the same event or object, we do not have the same experience of it.

So how were we going to manage the challenge of writing this article together? Since beyond the practical considerations such as jet–lag and the complications of language, we were clearly not seeing things the same way? Our success seems to have resided in our common disciplinary background. Both of us being sociologists/anthropologists by training, we had recourse to the reflexive process at the foundation of our profession. In other words, we began by evaluating our own models for reading situations and interpreting the Other, and we rapidly remembered that there's no one Truth, but a plurality of points of view. Neither of our interpretations was therefore false or bad, but demonstrated simply a difference of perspective and a frame of reference.

The tension underlying this transatlantic collaboration can also be transposed to personal and professional situations, or to those of a sociologist aiming to integrate him or herself in to a new population for study or of a designer seeking to understand the uses of a product or service in order to improve it through its innovation. These collaborative situations between researchers and/or professionals sharing neither the same maternal language nor cultural foundations are more and more common. So, which viewpoints and positions should we adopt, and which techniques should we use when we are trying to understand the Other?

This article proposes three groups of "best practices" originating from comprehensive sociology that can be applied to other disciplines and notably to design. The first treats positions to adopt in the situation of a face–to–face interview. The second deals with manners of observation and the tools favoring a more focused view. The third concerns the ways in which we can counter our own projections as we interpret the data acquired.

Tool Box – by Magdalena Jarvin

For the convenience of presentation, interviewing and observation techniques have been disassociated here. In practice – "in the field" – these two tools can be used together, in parallel or simultaneously. Also, we will designate the professional as the "investigator" and the individual interrogated and observed as the "subject." A question of terminology, the investigator can be a sociologist or a designer, and the subject can be an "informer" or a "client".

What Attitude to Adopt? Best Practices to Succeed in an Interview

By accepting to make him or herself the subject of a study, the individual takes a risk – the risk of not being understood, of having the sensation of losing face, to experience the discomfort of speaking about his or her daily habits. The professional in effect asks them to formulate remarks about a use or a practice that is sometimes so integral to their life that they are not necessarily aware of it. To present them with the challenge of describing it or reproducing it under the keen eye of an outside observer can create a sort of anxiety, and it is therefore necessary that the professional master the effects of his subjective influence.

In order to help the subject to speak freely, the investigator creates in advance a series of questions that will serve to support the interaction. The first questions have particular importance since they determine the rest of the exchange. Various tactics are possible: some direct questions, simple and easy, or conversely a very broad question that leaves the subject the possibility to choose the direction that suits him or her best. What is essential is to break the ice and the make the subject feel confident in their speech. From these first exchanges, the investigator gathers the topics retained by the subject and adjusts the remainder of his questions around these topics. If, on the contrary, he takes it upon himself to follow the interview guide point by point, as it was constructed in advance and without following the path of his interlocutor, he risks arriving at an impasse. The investigator must therefore undertake a doubled task in real time; listen to what the interlocutor is explicitely saying, and pose questions about what they are saying implicitly. The two main questions to keep in mind are: "what is he saying about the things he is talking about?" and "what is he saying about what he thinks?" The response to these two questions, posed silently and throughout, will help the investigator adjust his style of language to that of his interlocutor. A university lecturer who asks questions using an academic vocabulary or a technician who cannot manage to remove himself from his professional jargon is at high risk of creating a lack of investment, or, on the contrary, of provoking an increase in tension. In order for the interlocutor to be sufficiently at ease to deliver the details, he or she must not feel threatened. It is here that the profession of the investigator resembles to a tightrope walker; they must create a horizontal rapport without forgetting that they remain the master of the game. It is the investigator who asks the questions, while remaining attentive to the sensibilities of their interlocutor. A subject who feels uncomfortable or who has the impression of being judged will inevitably end up closing off, generally responding more and more briefly to questions to show that he or she wishes to end the interview. Even if the interaction resembles a conversation on the surface, the investigator must avoid falling into an equivalence of positions, and in the same time act "as if".

One key to success is to make the subject feel that their testimony is unique, which in the beginning requires a certain flexibility and capacity for improvisation and adaptation on the part of the investigator. Because even if the latter does not immediately find great interest in what is said, he must do everything in his power to guarantee the fluidity of the exchange. To do so, he must question himself: if he is having trouble involving himself in the discourse, it may be because he cannot manage to hear what was interesting, and must therefore deepen the attentiveness of his listening. It is in this way that he will progressively discover a new universe, with a system of values, operational categories, and other surprising particularities other than his own. He must become sympathetic with the subject and grasp his or her intellectual structures – in other words demonstrate "empathy." In order to integrate himself into the mental and conceptual structure of his interlocutor, the inves-

tigator must put his own opinions and thought categories aside. All attitudes of rejection or hostility must be avoided, regardless of the ideas and behavior of the speaker. If he really wants to understand, the investigator must manage to rid himself of his own morals; he will reclaim them once the interview is over.

Classical teaching in interview techniques recommends neutrality from the interviewer, and the importance of showing neither approbation nor disapproval, nor surprise. In adopting a comprehensive position, on the other hand, it is considered that the informants need guiding points to help them develop their comments, and the investigator who remains too reserved will prevent them from expressing themselves. In other terms, it is the exact opposite of neutrality and distance which is necessary here; the investigator enters into the word of the informant without becoming their double though. For the informant, the investigator must be a stranger, an anonymous person to whom one can say anything since he will never be seen again. But for the duration of the interview, he must become as close as a familiar member of their circle. The most intense confessions will result from the complex combination of these two opposite expectations.

How to Watch? Best Practices for Succeeding in an Observation

A practice is never neutral; it always bears meaning. It is inscribed in the spacial and temporal context and reacts to interactions (individual–object, individual–individual, individual–environment). The meaning that is conferred upon it depends on a multitude of factors such as the learning that came from it, the value that is attributed to it, the pleasure or revulsion that one feels upon realising it, its categorization as good or bad, authorised or proscribed. To better grasp the meaning of a practice, two complementary methods are suggested: observe the individual while he is doing it and ask questions about it. This approach allows us to pick up on any possible disconnect between saying and doing, which generally proves to be rich in insight.

To study a practice, one must begin by decid-

ing what one is observing. Just like with a photographic zoom, it is impossible to watch from close proximity and from far away at the same time, so one must choose. Is it, for example, the an individual's use of his mobile phone in a public space, or the way in which he invests himself emotionally in the object that interests the investigator? According to the aims of his research, he will not choose the same observational situations and will not pose the same types of questions. It is a question of scale (Desjeux, 1997).

Once the scale has been decided, the next step is to determine more specific zones of observation. The difficulty with the exercise of observation resides, in effect, in the (false) idea that in order to see it is enough to look; contrary to what we tend to believe, we very often remain myopic. If the objective is to understand the strategies for creating a private bubble in which the user can converse in a relaxed way in a public place, the gaze of the observer can not encompass the space in his ensemble, the interactions between passers–by, and the micro–gestures of the user all at the same time. In the same way as before an interview, it is therefore recommended to construct an observation model in advance. This will help to focus the gaze once in the field, as a protection against a dispersed view.

One pertinent and effective way of organizing this guide is the method of itineraries (Desjeux, 1998), which consists of following a practice step by step. Thus, the observer interested in visitors in a shop, for example, begins by choosing one of them from the moment of his entrance, following him in his wanderings, noting the objects that seem to capture his attention, recording the stops he makes along the way and their locations, as well as his interactions with employees and other clients and the purchases he might make, right up until the moment when he leaves the store. These observations will be more precise if the observer has drawn a plan of the site in advance, upon which he can trace the visitor's route. The recourse of these mapped wanderings, chronicles of activity (detailing the order in which the individual conducted the tasks) and counts (how many times did an individual pass through the same place, how many times does he make the same gesture) then allows for the objectivication of the occupation of

space. They favor, in effect, the highlighting of differentiated uses of the space in one's ensemble; rather than perceiving a hierarchic and disoirganized itinerary, these models bring the attraction or rejection of certain zones of the store to the forefront.

If, after having observed a user, the investigator asks the subject to describe the route that he has just taken, it is highly likely that he will be unable to do so. The investigator can then produce the map of his movements and invite him to comment upon it. This crossing of views fulfills two functions; on the one hand, it identifies a possible disconnect between what the subject says he did and what the map in fact recorded. The gap which appears thus generally reveals implicit values, of a system of reference of which the subject is barely conscious because it is so ingrained. In adopting a comprehensive position, an individual is never considered irrational; he always has reasons for doing what he does (Boudon, 2003). It is therefore a question of identifying these deeper reasons. On the other hand, the fact of submitting one's observational notes to one's interlocutor and asking him to react to them could supply subjective information as to the reasons for which he stopped at a certain place, touched a particular object, had such a reaction. The investigator will therefore have access to a level of knowledge that was in no way observable from the exterior.

Faced with study subjects that are difficult to observe (having a private character, for example), the method of itineraries can be applied in an interview situation. The observer proceeds in a similar manner, asking his or her subject to describe, in detail and step by step, a practice. We measure here the importance of the capacity to imagine ourselves in our interlocutor's place, representing the action or the gestures or attitudes that we would have had in their place, in order to ask questions that are better adapted to the described situation.

What Interpretation to Make? Best Practices for a Comprehensive Analysis

Whether it is an interview or an observation, the greatest difficulty that the investigator will encounter will reside undoubtedly in his "correct" understanding of the material gathered. As pre-

viously suggested, the meaning of a practice is neither unique nor absolute, but depends on a set of factors. The investigator will rarely succeed in identifying all of them and will focus, therefore, on understanding the meaning that the subject gives to them. The "correct" understanding of the investigator will thus be that which most closely approaches the meaning that his interlocutor offers.

For this there are several ways to proceed, beginning by verifying with the subject if one has properly understood his comments by reformulating them in one's own terms. One can also proceed by contradiction, suggesting the opposite of what has just been said in order to see how the interlocutor re–explains his point of view or brings new arguments. This technique must, however, be used with caution as it can also give the subject the impression that he is being tested, considered incomprehensible or irrational, and may involuntarily provoke a withdrawal.

Another method to verify if the investigator has "properly" understood consists simply in showing his analyses to the interlocutor. Is this in agreement with the interpretations made, and if not, why? At which moments does the subject feel misunderstood, which terms seem to have caused confusion, what might he have left unexplained? This method can be uncomfortable for the investigator himself, since it sometimes reveals his difficulty in setting aside his own judgments. His interpretations may have remained too close to his system of personal values, and he will then realize that he has implicitly imposed them on the discourses or the practices of the subject. If this proves to be the case, it is imperative that he puts himself back into question and reevaluates his reflexivity. Because it is this self consciousness and this capacity to distance oneself from the subject that guarantees the sound scientific basis of the comprehensive method.

Finally, if the investigator manages to construct an explanatory system in which the discourses and practices of his interlocutor find a place, respond to each other, and make sense together, there is a good chance that he has succeeded in "correctly" understanding them. For

this, it is necessary to alternate between the field and analysis, to listen to one's own feelings and to make the effort to be conscious of one's own judgements and preconceived ideas. If a practice or a comment is surprising, the investigator must not necessarily omit them from his analysis but, on the contrary, ask himself where they find their place in the overall system. There resides the beauty and the difficulty of this approach: to integrate the Other's systems of meaning, to understand them from the inside with his classifications and motivations, and to then be able to describe them from the outside with and beyond one's own subjectivity.

Conclusions – by Inga Treitler

To recreate the senses, the smells and the extreme edges of what it is to see in America, the Netherlands or any other culture, then road trips or "field work" with all their stumbles and their wonderment, go all the deeper precisely in revealing the essence of those cultures as well as our very place in our own. Sometimes we don't know what to think about what we are seeing. Sometimes we don't even notice as we are seeing, that what our senses expose can help us crack what we take for granted as the natural – the cycle of cultural reproduction. And that crack can begin to point us toward innovation.

Our ethnographic understanding comes only when we leave our moorings. Why was I –born and raised in North America– researching culture in Europe while Magda –born and raised in Europe– researching culture in North America? It is not so complicated. It is the better to see, to *really see* without bias, without the presuppositions of deep knowledge and history of culture with all its flaws, and the grip that it holds over its members continually to reproduce it. Our relationship began in Paris where I visited her class and heard and commented on projects from her students, crossing over cultures, just as Magda and I had done during our summer months. And though I had not followed the blog that documented her first motel experience, I did follow the one she kept during her next road trip, and thanks to Facebook my reading of that blog gained in dimensionality. Magda was part of that exploration of the Wild West.
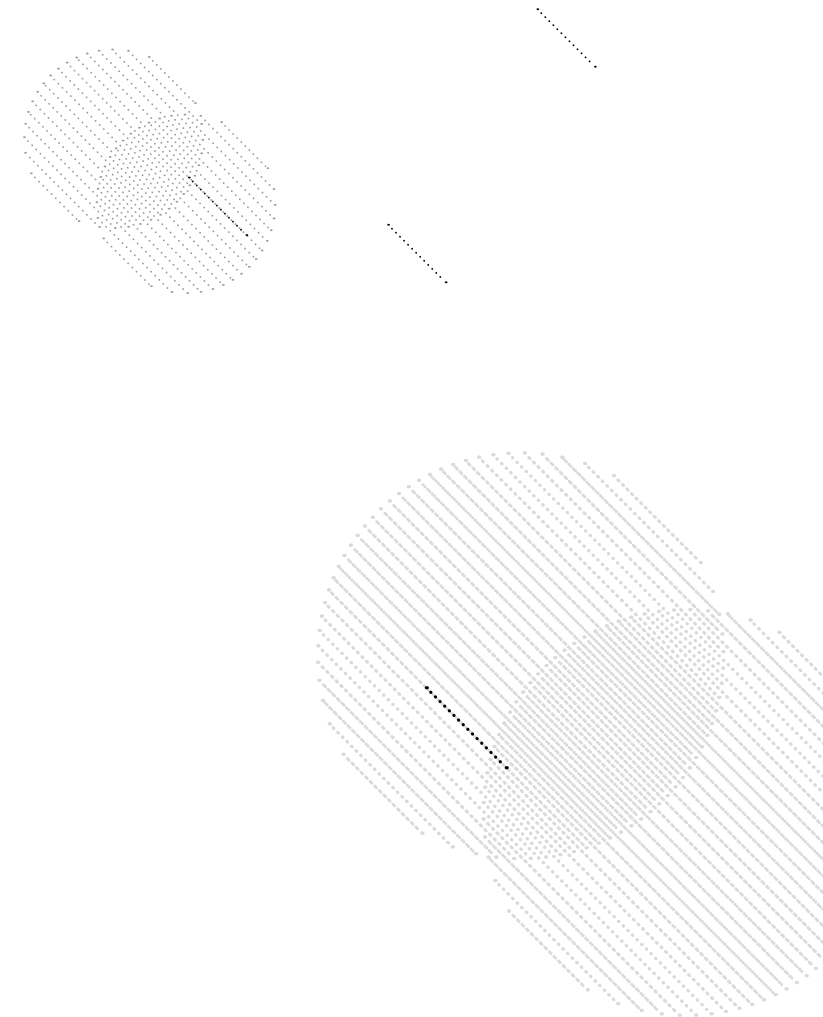
The observations are not just about the sites she saw, but about how she was surprised – by the ghost trailer parks, by the dried out banks of the largest lake in California. That "surprise" is a kind of reflexivity; it says, I've not seen it done this way, I know something different. And from the fact of the difference, we ethnographers and readers of ethnography learn something new. People took pictures of Magda, which she posted, of herself with the cook of the Bagdad Café, of herself standing on the back of a horse, of herself in a cowboy hat, and of course, herself sitting behind the wheel of a car. Those are the pictures that more than anything reveal that very lens that gives the ethnographic method potency. What do we put on our Facebook? It's something noteworthy, usually about us and what matters to us. In other words, who we see ourselves to be. And that moment of reflexivity reveals the assumption, biases and filters that allow us to say "this is natural" and in the very next breath to question "but why?!".

SECTIONS TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH BY
Rebecca Cavanaugh

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Food for Thought: the Problematic Affinities of Design and Sociology

PHILIPPE GAUTHIER

Djinane Alsuwayeh & Erica Lepke

Abstract

When we examine scientific and pseudo-scientific research in the field of design and sociology we might be surprised to find that despite the obvious links between these two fields, little has been done to feed any dialogue between them.

In fact, two questions were raised: the first concerned the nature of the dynamics through which social order is composed and maintained, ensuring the existence of social institutions, or in other words, a structure that could sustain enduring communities; the second concerned liberty and the role of order in life. How, in social order, does innovation succeed in renewing the framework of community life? How, in social order, does innovation succeed in renewing the framework of community life? These vast and abstract questions have occasionally led sociologists to areas of reflection close to those of researchers in design. Indeed, is not the old question of the social impact of technologies another way of querying the role of objects in the identity of a social order inherited from history? Is technical innovation a factor of change or conformity? What does that suggest with regard to the role of the designer? How can we think of the designers as free-willing contributors to the formation of these structures? Here the fundamental problematics of the social sciences and humanities – and notably of sociology – meet the questions that have provided the backdrop to the debates and reflections on design.

Once we have identified some of the obstacles that explain sociology's impermeability to objects formed in the design field, we will analyse the problematics of the action that, we believe, could remove all ambiguity about the proximity of the two disciplines.

Food for Thought: The Problematic Affinities of Design and Sociology

PHILIPPE GAUTHIER

1. Introduction

When we examine scientific and pseudo-scientific research in the field of design and sociology we might be surprised to find that despite the obvious links between these two fields, little has been done to feed any dialogue between them. The scientific project of sociology was partially formed as a reaction to economics, which the founders of sociology reproached, among other things, for having naturalized maximised rationality (Joas, 1999) and which, more importantly, shed insufficient light on how and why the pursuit of competing interests could ensure order within the communities (MacIntyre, 1984; Polanyi, 1983). In fact, two questions were raised. The first concerned the nature of the dynamics through which social order is composed and maintained, ensuring the existence of social institutions, or in other words, a structure that could sustain enduring communities. The second concerned liberty and the role of order in life. How, in social order, does innovation succeed in renewing the framework of community life? These vast and abstract questions have occasionally led sociologists to areas of reflection close to those of researchers in design. Indeed, is not the old question of the social impact of technologies another way of querying the role of objects in the identity of a social order inherited from history? Is technical innovation a factor of change or conformity? What does that suggest with regard to the role of the designer? How can we think of the designers as free-willing contributors to the formation of these structures? Here the fundamental problematics of the social sciences and humanities – and notably of sociology – meet the questions that have provided the backdrop to the debates and reflections on design.

Without wanting to enumerate a history of ideas for the purpose of weaving the conceptual and historical ties between sociology and design, we do need to query the extremely aloof relationship that sociologists have had with design. An overview of the sociological tradition and the theoretical reflections triggered by design will allow anyone interested to draw up a fairly detailed inventory of objects that are apparently common to both fields. At least since the HfG Ulm design school, theoretical design has constantly endeavoured to integrate the concepts and theories of sociology, anthropology and psychology. But this tokenism has never succeeded in establishing the relevance of design for social sciences and society, or a hypothesis of a shared ontology between these scientific disciplines and design. A somewhat closer look reveals that the sharing process between these two research fields is not quite reciprocal, and sociologists have rarely taken up the issues uncovered by research on design. The asymmetry of the relationship is a problem when the time comes to define a field of investigation in design. Faced with the questions and crucial issues revealed by the reflexion on design, man-made environment and technology, the design field appears steeped in powerless social theory. The receptivity of the design field to social theory must therefore conceal a more fundamental tie with sociology. It is this hidden tie that we attempt to reveal.

Once we have identified some of the obstacles that explain sociology's impermeability to objects formed in the design field, we will analyse the problematics of the action that, we believe, could remove all ambiguity about the proximity of the two disciplines.

2. Three Obstacles

If we trace the ties between the sociology and the field of investigation that has developed with the emergence of the design professions, we encounter several difficulties. First the figure of the designer is still poorly defined today, blurred at it is by the superposition of two profiles that intersect but never exactly coincide. On the one hand there is the professional designer, engaged in real-time production of concrete responses to the singular problems that face the world, and on the other the more abstract, typical-ideal figure of the agent-designer, referred to in reflections on design issues. A second difficulty lies in the discontinuities in the discourse about shared subjects of reflection about objects and about action. The object, product, or system – or to put it more simply, the artefact – represents a notion that we can either reduce to the narrow reality of a particular consumer product, or extend broadly to symbolism. A similar case can be made of action, which is generally examined either from an ethical point of view or from a theoretical one. A third difficulty concerns the irreconcilable nature of two forms of engagement: researchers are attached to a reality they try to describe as faithfully as possible, whereas the experts attempt to shape the world for the sole purpose of improving the existence of his inhabitants. To take the marvellous formula often used by Alain Findeli (2006), for traditional scientific disciplines the world is an object to explore, describe and understand, whereas for those engaged in reflection on design, the world is a project to achieve.

2.1 The Hazy Figure of the Designer

The first difficulty, that of the poorly-defined figure of the designer, tends to play down the highly problematical nature of the very notion of design itself, as much from the philosophical aspect as the epistemological, anthropological and social ones. It appears that none of the traditional disciplines have understood the relevance of any reflection on design, representative though it is of Western modernity. Yet for nearly one century the tensions in design, as a subject of contemplation with its incarnations in the reality of designers' professional practices, have fed a rich and fertile reflection on action, knowledge, culture and ethics. It is surprising that when sociology was first established in France and in Germany, its main protagonists never mentioned design, Walter Gropius or the Bauhaus. Yet Max Weber's analyses on modern bureaucracies, developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, were surprisingly illustrated by the evolutions of Gropius' project – which ushered in the formation of a new professional class that assumed power over others on the sole basis of a well-accepted instrumental rationality (MacIntyre, 1984: 86). With rare exceptions, the view of design as being rooted in a utilitarian conception of morality, one shared by Weber, never roused any interest beyond a circle of design researchers (Margolin, 2002: 4). Sociologists failed to understand, any more than the others, the extent of the cognitive issues revealed by research on design, even though this phenomenon is rooted in the social, cultural and moral transformations that were to come in the 20th century. Thus this first difficulty could be resumed by stressing that although we sometimes get the impression that sociologists are discussing design when they talk about transformations in innovation and action in the modern world, they never explicitly refer to the paradigmatic figure of the designer as the agent of that change. Only occasionally, members of the corresponding socio-professional category appear in their analyses in the context of research, where the definition of that category itself is not an issue (Dubuisson and Hennion, 1996; Barrey, Cochoy and Dubuisson-Tellier, 2000).

2.2 One object, Many Things, Few Exchanges

The second difficulty reveals the enigma more clearly. It concerns the mutual deafness of sociology and design faced with any discourse constructed by the one or the other about objects that they might share in common and notably about the object itself, the artefact. Indeed, among the conceptual objects central to design (apart from modalities of action which are at the core of both the innovation process and the design methods, as much as in the uses of the innovations) is the object, the materiality of the world. The artefact also appeared very early on as a founding theme in social sciences, be it an economic commodity, a favourite with Karl Marx, or a cultural instrument for anthropology, a tool of segregation for the feminists, or a testing ground for social ties for Luc Boltanski with or without Laurent Thévenot (Thévenot, 1994: 72-73). And yet it was only when the humanists approached this reality via structuralism in both semiotics and anthropology, that their work succeeded in percolating into the field of design, confirming the extension of the designer's field of intervention beyond the territory circumscribed by the materiality of the world. This redeployment of design was made easier when the world of marketing borrowed from a type of structural anthropology, with which the professional

design world has always been in collusion. On the sociologists' side, it was not until the emergence of the constructivist trend in the sociology of sciences that they began to be interested not in Objects but in certain objects in their most concrete and specific forms such as electrical networks (Hughes, 1989), bicycles (Pinch and Bijker, 1989), domestic decoders for television signals (Akrich, 1990), door closers (Latour, 1993), and public transport technology (again Latour, 1992). In fact, in the debate on design methods of the 1960s we would be hard-pressed to find a sociologist who saw the opportunity to reflect upon the conditions and issues specific to the formation of this new expertise in modern liberal democracies. The dialogue appears to have been far more fruitful between the sociology of organisations (Crozier, 1977; Simon, 1983) and ergonomics, and possibly it is to this opening that we owe the user-centred approaches and related concepts of some sociologists' research (Conein and Jacopin, 1994).

2.3 Epistemological Closure

The third difficulty lies in the question of the relationships between two disciplines, or more precisely between one discipline, sociology, and the field of investigation formed around design. For a sociological publication, to produce a special issue on the theme of design would not be a problem since sociology has always shown an astonishing capacity to form new objects and placing them behind the two-way mirror of social description. In that sense, a slightly worldly sociology of design would fit well alongside the sociology of organisations, sport, health, professions, education, science and even sociology of sociology. But for a design publication to want to dialogue with sociology is an entirely different matter. The concept of "designerly ways of knowing" (Cross, 2001) is still fragile and would have difficulty protecting its brush with sociology against the risk of being taken over by social theory. If we succeed in avoiding the anticipated onslaught by issuing the claim that design is an applied sociology, we would still have to take up the epistemological challenge of science, the very one that led social sciences to plant their flag in what Jean-Claude Passeron (2006) has described as "non-Popperian space of natural reasoning". The future of the discipline will depend on how we

take up this challenge: design as science deploying singular but explicit, provable methods, or design as a field of investigation borrowing forms and trials[1] from "sociological reasoning". How can we avoid being locked into this alternative? Perhaps design has the means to move frontiers within which "natural reasoning" retains its provable capacities? Then research in sociology and design would share not only theoretical concepts and certain objects in common, but epistemic as well.

Sociological reasoning was formed as a specific epistemic method largely as a result of speculations about the categories of action. If we take the hypothesis of the proximity of sociology and design research seriously, we will understand that it is by starting out from this same category of action that we may find a shared terrain for both sociology and design.

3. Action and Innovation. The Two Keys to the Epistemic Block

Since the origins of sociology, actions and the way we explain them have been the central focus of research in that discipline (Freund, 1973; Engel in Davidson, 1993). Understanding an action necessarily signifies bringing it closer to the historical background that generated it in order to reveal the meaning it had for the actor. How then, can we treat a reality in universal terms when its fundamental meaning is rooted in historical contexts? As Passeron (2006) has asked, how do we transcend the categories of natural language to speak of action without running the risk of emptying it of its meaning? Neither Vilfredo Pareto, Weber or Émile Durkheim managed to avoid this question. According to the thesis proposed by Hans Joas (1999: 52), it was in fact Talcott Parsons' intention to reveal the convergence between these three founding endeavours of sociology and establish the discipline on the possibility of a unitary theory of action. All efforts at understanding society and the social fact are inevitably based on such a theory. The same is true of design. Whether we engage in practical or theoretical research, the way of dealing with action (that of others, as our own), is to understand it first in a series of universal concepts that will then be submitted to the test of experience of the world. This is still a constant

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subject of preoccupation. The pragmatic turn that this question has provoked in French sociology over the past 20 years, opens up a first passage for a shared reflection with design[2].

3.1 Action as Object

Weber's theory of action stresses how important it is for observers attempting to understand the actions of others, to access the reasons for the action, namely the goals pursued by its agent. For Weber, the term "action" only indicates that human behaviour to which the agents of the behaviour can attribute a meaning (Weber, 1995: 28). He therefore divided up the field of action into unintentional and intentional activities, in line with what he called axiological rationality. Social actions are therefore understandable in as much as the agents themselves are able to explain them, and they are explained in the way the agents do so. Thus Weber moved sociology far from the behaviours that interested the behavioural approach, which remains unconcerned with the sense that the agents attach to their lives. All intentional activities are composed of a range of actions that may be identified in two ways: either according to the form of reasoning that governs them, as for Vilfredo Pareto (1968; Passeron, 1993: 14-15) and the economists who endeavoured to identify the mechanisms of individual decision-making; or else according to the nature of the goals pursued by the actors, as was the case for Weber and the sociologists devoted to revealing the social and cultural meaning of action. Thus a specific status was created for the intentionality of the agents in the explanation of the social act, while associating the range of purposes (Weber, 1995: 55), interests, or "good reasons" (Boudon, 1990) provided by the individuals to explain their behaviour.

For professional designers, the reality of the action is also an essential datum. The ultimate determining factor of the novelty of products, services, and mechanisms of all kinds that they propose, is surely the lasting gap that keeps the user from his/her life projects? Does improving an unsatisfactory situation by conferring new qualities on it, or by correcting the inadequate performance of the objects that constitute it, suppose measuring that action in proportion to the grievances ex-

pressed by the individuals about the world they inhabit? By replying in the affirmative, we obviously place the quest for relevance and accuracy in individual representations and the account of their actions, as the central goal of all reflection for design purposes. This leads us to recognise that a designer-promoted action theory will reveal a user whose creative, or abnormal, or sub-optimal nature underpins the entire analysis. In a way, so long as the creativity of the users exceeds that of the designers, architects, administrators or educationalists investing in their work (interfaces, architectural programmes, teaching methods, flow charts, etc.) the designers will have a future. Indeed, how else can we understand the constant call for innovation – or understand dissatisfaction? According to Joas (1999), the nature of the creative engine in history remains one of the founding questions in sociology. In design as in any therapeutic act, acting for another is understanding the other, letting the cure takes root in his or her frustrations, aspirations, uses and humanity. But that requirement, intimidating though it may be, is particularly problematical in domains like design where the therapeutic act is addressed to Others in the plural. The representation of the underlying user in design must be more than a mere reminiscence of a particular person. The methodological tools that have gradually emerged in design practice –user- or human-oriented methods, experiential design (Hanington, 2003)– bear witness to the fact that the calls for abstraction and the formalisation of a discourse on the Other in design, have not gone unheard. But while scientific discourse sometimes appears to have adapted to some juggling between accuracy and truth, confirming that a gain in accuracy will inevitably increase our scepticism regarding our representations of the world (Williams, 2006), design requires a profession of faith that makes the inconsistencies in its knowledge base particularly awkward. As in sociology, certain design practices have shown ways that make it possible to get around the scepticism trap. But before we look at them we must revisit the main sociological theses on the subject of action theories.

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1   These epistemological questions have been dealt with exhaustively by Alain Findeli (2006).

2   We should doubtless analyse the role played in this movement by the conceptualisation efforts made in the universities by members of the departments of social work, for whom John Dewey's pragmatic theses still have considerable influence. For a good sample of these efforts, see François Huot and Yves Couturier (2003).

3.2 The Sociology of Action and the Challenge of Scepticism

The various refinements to Weber's axiological rationality of human behaviour and Pareto's pseudo-logicism of historic action, resulted in a clarification of the aims of social behaviours. However, this was achieved by occasionally leaving aside the contexts in which the action is deployed. Yet the intention that signifies action is the intention to act according to a given context and for the purpose of transforming it. One of the merits of the ethnomethodologists (Garfinkel, 2007; Coulon, 1996) and the constructivist sociologists, is that they were able to revive researchers' interests in rooting action in the context and situation of its execution (Latour, 1994). What then, are the issues involved in evoking a situation in the framework of action theory?

One of the problems posed by the approach to social action solely through the motives of the actors, is that the significance this reveals only exists a posteriori to the action. It is only once the action has been accomplished that we can provide an explanatory meaning to it. Nothing therefore ensures that this explanatory meaning has anything to do with the modalities that govern a succession of actions.

That criticism, which triggered an entire tradition of sociological thought, owes a great deal to the sociologist Alfred Schütz (1987). Schütz' phenomenological approach opened the way to a radical questioning of the founding objects of sociology, and specifically to a criticism of the ontological status conferred on them. For Schütz, the concept of action is only an objectivised form given to events in order to account for them publicly. The reasons, motives, interests and causes of the action, that natural language highlights to attribute sense to it, are in fact only the exterior modality. The concepts relating to the explanation of the action that provide it with its causal texture, do not act as determiners of that action themselves. They only represent the forms through which it is possible to describe them.

We can try to put Schütz' views into perspective with the concept of a speech act, in the way it was described by the philosopher Paul Ricœur (1977). In a speech act, as for example when making a promise, the reality of the action is entirely understood in the utterance. Here the utterance doesn't provide any description of the act, it is the act. The characteristics of a promise therefore provide a good illustration of the limits of natural language that Schütz wished to highlight. The nature of various forms of action is as far removed from the way these are processed as actions, as the utterance of a promise is from the description of what a promise is (Ricœur, 1977: 23).

Schütz' reflections helped to shed new light on certain sociological objects, which until then had stayed in the shadow of the utilitarianism of Weber-type conceptions. Before reasoning about an action, all agents must be able to demarcate that action within a broader situation, namely the constant flow of experience [3]. The possibility of an agreement about what constitutes an action within a broader context, is what allows an act to acquire a social identity and a certain objectivity (Quéré, 1994: 151; Ricœur, 1986: 244). In short, there is no action without an action situation. Thus sociology is pushed to describing these situations and studying the grammar through which the persons engaged in the action manage to maintain the social identity of their actions (Quéré, 1994: 156-157).

As Passeron (2006) has said, the consubstantiality of meaning of social action together with its context, leads us to view suspiciously any possibility of implementing a language through which it would seem possible to represent the action and its agent while keeping up with its significance. To understand the action we must be in the action, and remain attentive to what allows the agents to make it happen. That is more or less the radical programme that the leading ethnomethodologists had in mind. There is a problem here for the designer too. How is it possible to act for a plural and impersonal Other despite the uncertainty that hovers over all formalised representation of that being? What risks do we run by defining a therapeutic gesture on the basis of a poor image of the world and its beneficiaries? Two hypotheses appear to be in conflict here, the constructivist one, and the one associated with the work of Michel Foucault.

3.2.1 Constructivism: Dispersing Scepticism Issues in the Network of Actors

Constructivism in the sociology of science and technology has helped attract the attention of sociologists to the very nature of the objects required in social activities, taking the view that each one is a constituent in the context of these activities (Latour, 1994: 597). At the same time, by bringing together objects and agents, the constructivist approach posits that the legitimacy of design depends not only on products that can be attached to this activity, but also the set of actors who, at one moment or another of the activity, agreed on the correctness of certain decisions (Latour, 1993 and 1999). In practice and theory, the designer does not act only on objects but composes worlds by recruiting the actors who can contribute to the designers' objectives (Law, 1989: 112-113). Thus in addition to the functional, technical or formal criteria that confer a value on the objects conceived by the designer, there is a kind of ethical and pragmatic requirement that also weighs on each of the designers' services, in that their action network depends on other things, persons and organisations. The attention paid to the social foundations of the legitimacy of any object, as to scientific knowledge, comes from the principle of "symmetry" that the constructivists adopted in their scientific theory[4]. This principle means that the functional, efficient, popular or profitable object, must be stripped of any pretence of being a radically, trans-historically and objectively superior artefact to any other destined for the same use. Twentieth century industrial history is full of examples that show that the intrinsic merit of objects, technologies or theories has a relative impact on their effective outcome (Lemonnier, 1996: 18-19). In a way that implies that the success or failure of a given artefact does not reside in its essence or in the individual genius that shaped it, but is the fruit of a social dynamic based on a large network of actors. The designer himself is built in to that socio-technical hybrid network that leaves little room for manoeuvre for any specific expertise to be put forward. As part of the network, the designer is possibly more acted upon than agent. In any case, the responsibility that we might attach to the production of an artefact, is then distributed or disseminated to the entire network of actors.

The social responsibility of the technical and scientific actors highlighted by constructivism, is a weak one. That is all the more true in that the network of socio-technical actors exists not only prior to the moment of the artefact's conception, but also afterwards, suggesting a kind of alliance between the user and the designers, if not a possible permutation of each of their responsibilities within the network. That is what Thomas P. Hughes' (1989) attempts to illustrate with his concept of the "seamless web". By uniting the object's designers and users behind their shared interests, or at least their convergent ones, the socio-technological innovation process ensures the admissibility of products by the users and their absorption into the social fabric.

In this way, what the network produces has no external constraints for the users, thereby limiting the risk of any inaccuracy in the representation of the world on which the expert's service was based.

This first way to confront the risk of scepticism is interesting, particularly since it shifts the problem of representation and highlights the social nature of the designer's action. However, we do not consider this to be entirely satisfactory for two reasons. First because it places the actors' convergence of interests in the innovation principle, whereas the social nature of the conventions that draw innovators and users together within the same network should be a reminder that the objects themselves sometimes rebel against the actors' desires, and impose their own constraints in these arrangements. Without this "rebelliousness", how would it be possible to explain the desire to innovate? Furthermore no designers would really dare base themselves on a constructivist assurance that the objects they develop will not impose constraints on the users, and that the functions they design, the scripts and procedures and experiences that shape it, contain no normative texture, however meagre. We must therefore also reject the constructivist model as being unsuitable for action. Indeed we would be mistaken to appeal to constructivism for principles of actions, those guides that allow designers to resolve the ten-

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3 There are numerous clues here to the convergence between certain trends in American phenomenology and pragmatism, which, together with ethnomethodology, provided the foundations of Chicago School sociology (Joas, 1993) (Barthélémy and Quéré in Garfinkel, 2007: 20).

4 This principle, concurrent with the falsification one suggested by Karl Popper in 1973 in his "Logic of Scientific Discovery", invites us to consider that what makes knowledge false is not fundamentally different from that which makes knowledge true. David Bloor, one of the creators of this perspective, states that "the use to which [the strong programme] is opposed [...] is the one that consists of evaluating the truth and the error, then adopting two different kinds of explanation based on that evaluation, depending on whether the beliefs are true or false. For instance, we can explain error in a causal manner, but not truth. That will be the object of a separate process that confers a teleological structure on the notion of truth instead of keeping it in the causal language of our everyday thought." (Bloor, 1982: 48-49).

sions between the specific problematic situations they broach, and the societal targets they pursue. Industrial design is like a trial to the anti-essentialism, and especially the anti-realism of the most radical constructivist trends in the sociology of science and technology. The normative shortcomings of constructivism, as a set of precepts guiding action, lead us therefore to turn towards another hypothesis to understand the risk inherent in scepticism that lurks in any theory of action in design.

3.2.2 Pragmatism: Taking on the Risk of Scepticism as a Social Role

The second hypothesis we shall look at to understand the risk of scepticism in design appears implicitly in the works of Michel Foucault. Indeed a concept of design is couched in Foucault's remarks when he describes in detail how our existences are modelled by the mechanisms that trace the limits of normality and legitimacy (Foucault, 1975; Agamben, 2007)[5]. Although he never names the implementers of this micro-policy, which finds its first incarnation in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, the normative levers he exposes are to be found in the design of devices that discipline the individual. The representationist risk may lie there, in the possibility that the inaccuracy inherent to action theory opens the way to a shift in the agents' representation to the side of specific conceptions of life, vectors of a normalisation of practice, or in other words, discipline. From that point of view, the risk associated with scepticism cannot be ignored.

Under Foucault's spotlight, we can see how simplistic it is to see the figure of the typical ideal designer as a mere category of creative professionals, whose responsibility does not extend beyond the narrow merchant domain. Rather the designer is a figure that embodies all the evils of modern liberalism as already analysed by Weber, but described even more harshly by Alasdair MacIntyre (1984: 107 and 1993: 371)[6]. For MacIntyre, these evils may be summarized by a belief in rationality as a model of conduct detached from all

tradition. This belief stamps a conception of life onto our daily debates, decisions, and projects, which is a subjectivist utilitarian one that places individual preference above the forms and conditions of community life.

A detour via moral philosophy is therefore necessary to find the means to take on the uncertainty that undermines the theories of action. This will certainly mean eliminating the representationism that affects our ways of seeing the world and which is largely fed by utilitarianism (Taylor, 1995). That was what the pragmatists attempted to do, notably the French school of pragmatic sociology (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991; Breviglieri and Stavo-Debauge, 1999). By redeploying the theory of action to a moral framework they transposed the issue of scepticism to an ethical plane. Indeed French sociology's "pragmatic gesture" as Marc Breviglieri and Joan Stavo-Debauge called it, made it possible to deal simultaneously with the capacity of actors to engage with the world and that of the sociologists to treat that engagement with engagement. By closing the rift between the subject of the survey and its object, pragmatism shows the work of researchers as another form of social engagement, as creative as the social actions that usually come under the researchers' scrutiny. Sometimes this repositioning raises new issues for the researcher, who then no longer sees the world as a reality that is placed there, but as a project to which his or her commitment will bring life. That is how sociology meets design in its search for a marker to lead its reflection and its action. Faced with the uncertainty of our assertions about history and action and our fragile accounts of the world, the only foundation on which we can truly depend is the engagement of the individual.

4. Conclusion

The relationship between design and sociology becomes especially clear when the social sciences return to some of their fundamental objects. Action, the role of free choice and autonomy in the community and the phenomenon of social innovation, lie at the core of sociology. Yet the creative nature of action is not easily contained in universal conceptual constructions. How can we build a general theory of action, of history and innovation, that could frame particular, never-to-be-reproduced observations, if not by trying to delineate that creative uncertainty that governs the engagement in the world of any action carried out by an agent. Joas (1999) sees this as the essential obstacle that lies between sociology and economics. At least it has led some sociological tendencies to keep a distance from representationism by considering sociologists as components in their object of study. This pragmatic turn in sociology may have a decisive impact on the definition of the field of research in design. It may oblige the designers themselves to pick up that old pragmatic position from where Donald Schön (1983) had left it.

TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH
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[5] The American sociologist Richard Sennett has also developed a similar concept describing the tensions in play between people and the urban reality that frame their everyday existence (Sennett, 1970 and 1994).

[6] I will not resist the pleasure of once again using MacIntyre's concise prose in an extract that I have quoted on numerous occasions, in somewhat peremptory fashion, to my university students in the hope that it will open their eyes to their true responsibilities: "For in a society in which preferences, whether in the market or in politics or in private life, are assigned the place which they have in a liberal order, power lies with those who are able to determine what the alternatives are to be between which choices will be available. The consumer, the voter, and the individual in general are accorded the right of expressing their preferences for one or more out of the alternatives which they are offered, but the range of possible alternatives is controlled by an elite, and how they are presented is also so controlled. The ruling elites within liberalism are thus bound to value highly competence in the persuasive presentation of alternatives, that is, in the cosmetic arts. So a certain kind of power is assigned a certain kind of authority" – Alisdair MacIntyre (1988), Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, p. 345.

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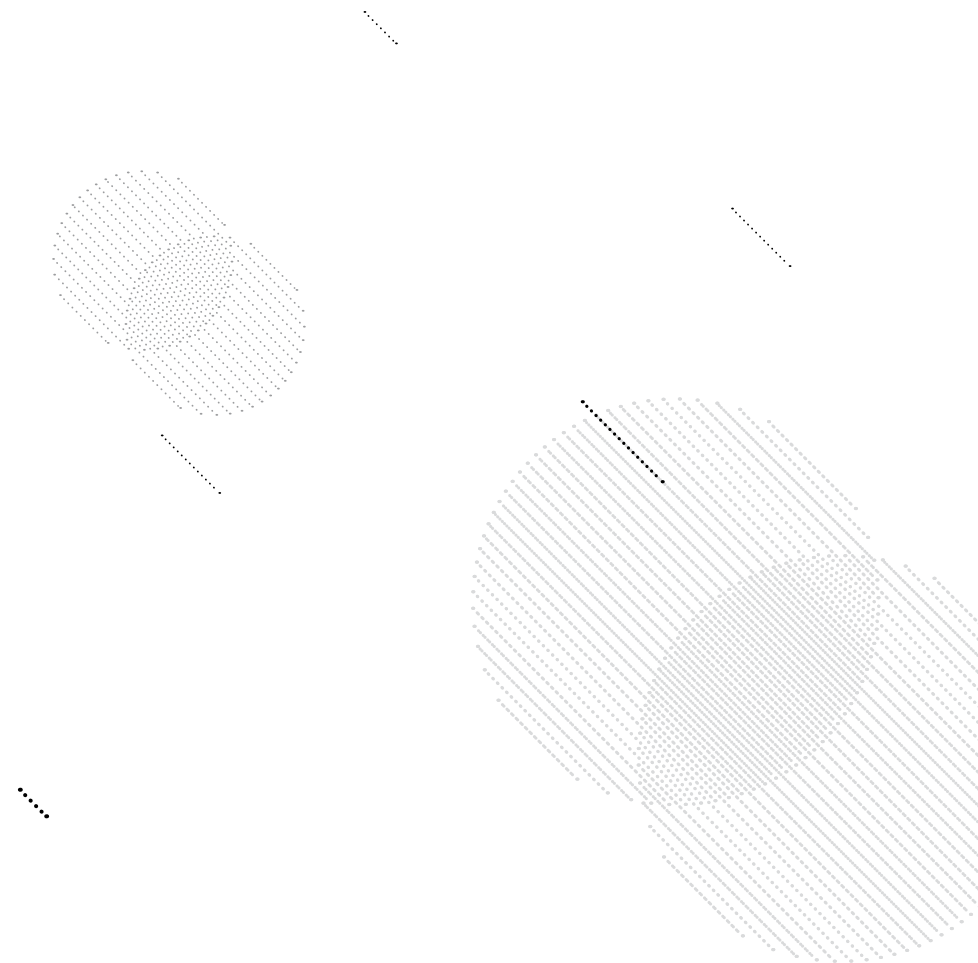
Social Sciences and Design:
Two Moments in the Same Narrative?

ELOI LE MOUËL

Miry Yun & Alex Mahler

Abstract

The work of the "Space Design and Identity" teams of the RATP (the Paris transport authority) is frequently carried out at the intersection of two porous but separate worlds, namely that of research and of project management.

The four years I spent on a "CIFRE" contract (a fixed-term research contract for doctoral students that combines research with working for a company) and after 2006, working for the company, enabled me to imbue myself in the two logics inherent to that particular universe and to understand that is often as difficult to reconcile the two as it is fruitful to succeed in doing so.

The designers' attitude is often to dispense with the contribution that social sciences in general, and the micro-sociology of interactions (the Chicago School) in particular, can provide in terms of detailed, rigorous and precise analysis of the various domains in their field, namely usage (the needs and values that usage entails), interpersonal interactions, but also those related to space: organising spaces, threshold and atmosphere studies.

At the same time, researchers often lack understanding when faced with corporate project management. Initial studies seem too superficial to them, their scope too restrictive and their duration too short.

I will therefore defend the idea that we could develop a hybrid world at the interaction of these two segregated stances, in which each side gives way to the other for the greater benefit of all. A world in which there is time for a deeper questioning prior to projects, yet one conceived entirely and exclusively at the service of the design of the product, service or space, within the strict framework of an imperative deadline.

Social Sciences and Design: Two Moments in the Same Narrative?

ELOI LE MOUËL

Introduction

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At the same time, researchers often lack understanding when faced with corporate project management. Initial studies seem too superficial to them, their scope too restrictive and their duration too short.

1. Survey timing

Contrary to the belief of many corporate businesses, the timing of a sociological survey is strictly governed by protocol. The contributions of the Chicago School, ethnomethodology and philosophy, provide a wealth of perspectives on the object of study (be it space, places, or the public) that can serve a range of sectors. Scientific surveys carried out *in situ* unravel the obscure areas of a complex terrain and approach it from an original angle.

On the fringes of structural monographs, the Chicago School attempts to bring life to space viewed as a vibrant mosaic, dependant on the situations that occur in it. The School's methodologies represent spaces as co-actors of their daily usage, whose constantly moving nature impacts the integration quality of the projects occurring within it.

Mosaic Spaces

The skills required for designing transport space can be adapted to many interdependent uses, including the design of course, but while factoring in maintenance logic, long-lastingness, cost management and integration.

Integration is of special interest to sociologists, since it naturally covers meanings that are dear to the social sciences. Design management teams (as well as related professions such as the architects, signage specialists, and city planners) attempt to create the conditions for harmonious interchange at the core of complex space by weaving various requirements together. They require different professional skills to cohabit and serve locations as diverse as tram stations, multi-modal hubs, mass-transit train stations, and so on. They also need to factor in the different spheres of the spaces they

are designing, some of which may seem irreconcilable, as for instance territorial over-marking by the organising authority *versus* that territory's overall ability to receive and welcome people.

[1] Design management teams need to allow exchanges between the functional authorities (flow management, signage, urban furnishing, and a variety of services) and the sensitive domain (coherence of materials, the use of lighting and sound, the layout and variety of furniture, the scenography of the services, or atmosphere creation, referred to by A. Peny as "sensitive architecture").

The core of the designer's action in transportation space therefore occurs at the place where the users' expectations regarding the space they pass through daily and their capacity to respond in a precise and timely fashion. Here we are broaching the very specificity of the Chicago School's research: resource space whose characteristics may be deciphered by the usage and interactions that are formed and unformed in it at every moment.

Sociology provides designers with an inversion of their own viewpoints on their design work. This ranges from the dynamics of usage to apprehending and redefining the space through the filter of the distributed perceptions that nourish them. To contextualise (in the sense of the context of usage) a component that will be deployed, or an action, or engagement, requires pacing the field in the perpetual motion that makes it what it is, walked and ran by thousands of competitive, cutting, segmenting appraisals. We need to draw frames, both global and fragmented, to provide that image of constant tension between the global and the fragmentary. It is what Goffman called "identifying the major issues in small situations" and providing the object, component or matter with the same opportunities provided to the passer-by, seizing them in the complex form inherent to the quality of urban space, composed as it is of [2] "dispersion and overlapping of belonging".

The vast areas of the Saint-Lazare Station in Paris (here the exchange hall for the No. 14 Métro line). It is a vast, dynamic and multi-faceted mosaic composed of overlapping perspectives, a mix of uses, a complex combination of physical and perceptive thresholds and open passageways.

[3] Interaction sociology needs to understand how space and place design in cities is played out in frameworks that are both structural and fragmented, where "ethnic or social enclosures" spatial or temporal, can nevertheless be combined with the socialisation process.

The mosaic figure naturally emerges on the survey horizon. Sociologists in action attempt to draw a landscape that allows for the permanent to-ing and fro-ing between the global image that a mosaic presents when observed and the analysis of each of its components. They will unfold the construction to study the essence. More than that, they need to understand the underlying component, the nature of the cement (thresholds and junctions) that holds it together.

Usage Landscapes

In their survey work, when researchers move from concept to realization in a field in action they run

1   Joseph, Isaac (1993), L'espace public comme lieu de l'action, in « Annales de la Recherche Urbaine », n°57-58, Paris, pp. 210-217.

2   Joseph, Isaac, Du bon usage de l'école de Chicago, in Joël Roman (1993), « Ville, exclusion et citoyenneté », Paris, Seuil-Esprit, pp. 69-96.

3   Ibidem.

into a stumbling block. What methodological tools should they use to apprehend such vast and busy spaces as multi-modal transport hubs?

They will certainly have to borrow from the experience of related arts and sciences. Transport areas combine the properties of traffic space governed by "visitor's rights" with those of communications space, governed by a "readability" "requiring that all action satisfies the requirements of public discourse, namely to submit to avowal protocols and justification procedures"[4]. Therefore the form laid down (or imposed) by a designer for a shared traffic space, from the overall aspect to the care given to its component details, acts directly on the nature of the usage that occurs there. But in the sociology or ethnography of "ordinary speech", and "small reverences" or "the little adjustments of daily life"[5] (E. Goffman, in my translation), we also have the tools we need to invert the medium for understanding these spaces, and give reign to the free expression, invention and innovation of the actors in the play (in the Shakespearian sense – *all the world is* a [social!] stage). Let us prolong the metaphor and get to the heart of the reality.

The sociology of action provides designers with perspectives they often ignore and which have a direct correlation to the skills demanded by elected representatives and industrialists, as well as those imposed by current events, such as eco-design, design simplicity and user-oriented design. We shall return to that later. It immerses the researchers, armed with polysemic methodologies, in space in motion with *in situ* surveys, intense work, observations, note-taking, photographs, commented journeys, and interviews. The sociologists will use a Deleuzian logic to deconstruct their terrain before reconstructing it. They will seek to identify accounts of actions and routes, weak or strong daily involvements, and divide the space not so much into fixed micro-spaces, but into micro-sequences of action. "Staging urban space is not, therefore, preparing it for a show, or doing what it imposes on you. It means organising it into accounts of potential journeys. Similarly, conceiving architectural work in context and taking accessibility into account, would be admitting that, like theatre with its exposure time, intrigues and outcomes, the nature and aesthetics of a construction are related to its nearby environ-

ment, its thresholds, access points and exits"[6]. Space is therefore sequenced in an articulated suite of "dramatic" sketches based on an analysis of action, ends and roles.

Using theatre to analyse a course of action allows us to handle the transition between two orientations or viewpoints with its resulting blur concerning the "perception or understanding of perspectives". Because this type of analysis deals with phenomena relating to changes or breaches in the frameworks, it implies a diversity of perspectives and visual incongruity"[7]. Analysing a course of action also reveals rifts in the spatial linkage of a complex area or in settings located at the man/machine interaction. It reveals the lack of perceptive holds or any of their components, for the understanding of its users.

a

b

(*a*) Micro-sequence of action in the drama of everyday life. It is easy to imagine the consequences (justifications, adjustments, realignments, excuses, conflicts, etc.) if the location of the event were transposed to a subway platform in full rush hour (*b*).

Consequently this type of analysis highlights the innovative strategies and improvised performances deployed by the actors on the stage for "reconstructing the world"[8]. A flurry of justifications to the co-actors, resulting in a series of playlets ranging from bursts of laughter, to blushing, and hesitant excuses to verbal attack. In other words, the stage-setting of the hesitant body preparing to retrench backstage (to continue with our theatrical imagery).

These survey methodologies shed light on behaviours and provide more detailed perspectives of the motives behind the action on the stage. They express the fringes or borders of the scene and their impact on the quality of the play being staged.

The sociologists or ethnomethodologists' peripheral view of the action focuses attention on the interaction between a qualified atmosphere (light or heavy, with sound or visuals, nocturnal or diurnal, influenced by the spatial or material disposition, etc.) and the perception of it that an actor in the scene will retain. They therefore query the nature of that interaction using an "alternative questioning based on what a concept of atmosphere created by our daily acts and gestures might be"[9]. Thus we enter the fringe of that mosaic, with its shady areas, flaws and detailed mutations. This dispersed territory raises the question of the "operating nature of the atmosphere" using a "mild pragmatism" and its validity for researchers as well as designers. How does an atmosphere act on us and how do we co-construct it with our uses?"

Over and above "injunctive" or "soliciting" space, the most diffuse space/passer-by interactions also confer subtle touches on the scene, a slight incline that slowly paces the step, requiring a slight readjustment of body posture and providing the space with a distribution and ecology that can only be understood by using that key. The perspectives provided by a sequence of actions are extended by a related notion, inherited from Leibnitz' "small perceptions", which enrich the complex shape of our mosaic, what J.P. Thibaud calls "the landscape of usage"[10].

Seizing Spaces in Action

Space is therefore not so much a structure (for engineers) or shape (the role to which designers are often reduced). It represents far more than the injunctive qualities of locations for regulating or guiding flows. Rather they are a part of the co-production that focus the designer's attention, related to the constantly reconstructed uses made of it by the actors. And these actors are at one and the same time the spaces acted upon and acted by, the transport users.

To seize these strata of understanding in action and the overlapping of perspectives and situations, requires rigorous tools and methodology as well as the time to use them *in situ*.

This scene provides an astonishing landscape of usage. The very structure of the space appears to guide the flow (the entrance to the corridor, the signage, the steel mass of the escalator glimpsed to the left). Yet the two marginal elements that define the real use of the place, which are quite clear since it is almost empty, are the lights and the solitary transport user. The light stresses the threshold and spreads the attention to the linkage required for a fluid journey. But the extraordinary passer-by co-constructs the ecology of the place by printing an identifiable and signified user ecology. Although she is alone, she appears to be sliding along the ramp to the far right-hand side, integrating perfectly with the overhead lighting that divides the passageway up the middle into an "upwards" and "downwards" section. She is the co-draughtsman of the scene's layout and behaviour.

It is necessary, if not vital, to blend into the atmosphere of a field study to understand "how it can set the tone or be perceived" (Gibson's affordances), but also how our daily activities become "part of the scenery". We need to bring together multiform strategies for this immersion, often amended and reformulated by and for a given field, and therefore require time to be allotted to research, even a short and delimited period.

4   Joseph, Isaac (1993), L'espace public comme lieu de l'action, op. cit.

5   Joseph, Isaac (1998) Erving Goffman et la microsociologie, Paris, PUF.

6   Freydefont, Marcel, Boucris, Luc, François, Guy-Claude (1993), revue Actualité de la scénographie, Paris, 1993.

7   Sartre, Jean-Paul (2000), Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions, Paris, LGF – Le Livre de Poche.

8   Jean-Paul Thibaud, in Espinasse, Catherine, Kaminagai, Yo, Milon, Alain, Le Mouël, Eloi (2009), Intervention « Habiter la Ville en Passant », Colloque de Cerisy « Lieux et Liens ; Espaces, Mobilités, Urbanités », 05-06/2009.

9   *Ibidem*.

10   *Ibidem*.

It is only with a shift in stance and a patient absorption of the place, that the vital issues in the work of the designers, architects and planners will emerge.

Then it will be possible to suggest nuances in the designers' work that will have determining consequences on the quality of the space (perceived, but also ethical) to which they have committed themselves. It is not so much a case of seeking to "create an atmosphere in a place" (artificiality of vocabulary, public discrimination) but to seek to "put a place in atmosphere"[11].

2. The Project Time

So how does that fit into corporate, industrial or designer territory? At this stage we need to absorb project management processes and identify the compatibilities with the social sciences, both at initiation and closure states, to locate possible co-production opportunities between the social sciences and the project (the third phase).

Structuring in Project Mode

In a large corporation, project mode organisation is required when several professions are concerned by the same demand or requirement and must interact to draw up a bid. Thus a team will be formed drawing its resources cross-functionally within the company, where as a general rule organisational verticality prevails, and a single project manager, belonging to a different, autonomous structure, will hold sway.

If the project turns out to be especially complex (a tramline for instance) it will be upgraded to a programme and will assemble the numerous projects requiring coordination (urban furniture for the tram line for instance).

A project follows an invariable, internationally recognised cycle, even though each company will adapt the framework to its own activities. It may be divided into five stages as follows[12]:
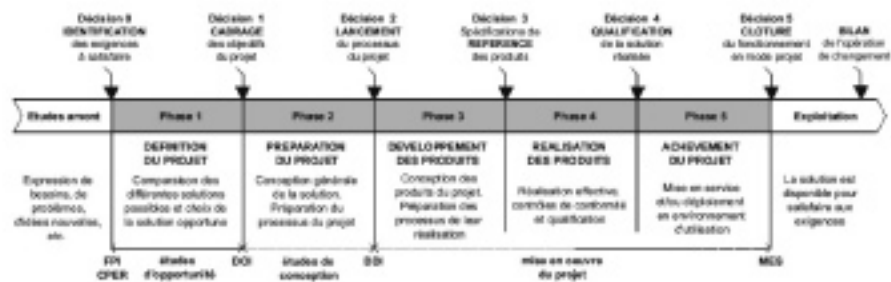
We shall attempt to bring the phases of a typical project requiring the skills of design management teams, into this global framework with a few explanatory diagrams.[13]

Project management is the responsibility of the project owner (contracting authority) who must approve each stage of the project

LIST OF CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENTS

CONTRACTUAL STAGE				OPERATIONAL STAGE				
Phase 1 Feasibility studies				Phase 2 Overall design stage		Phase 3 Detailed design stage	Phase 4 Implementation	Phase 5 Launch
Design strategy	Projected schedule	Validation and contracting	Pre-schedule	Consultation with designer	Draft pilot study	Definitive pilot study	Industrial consultation	Implementation	Assessment

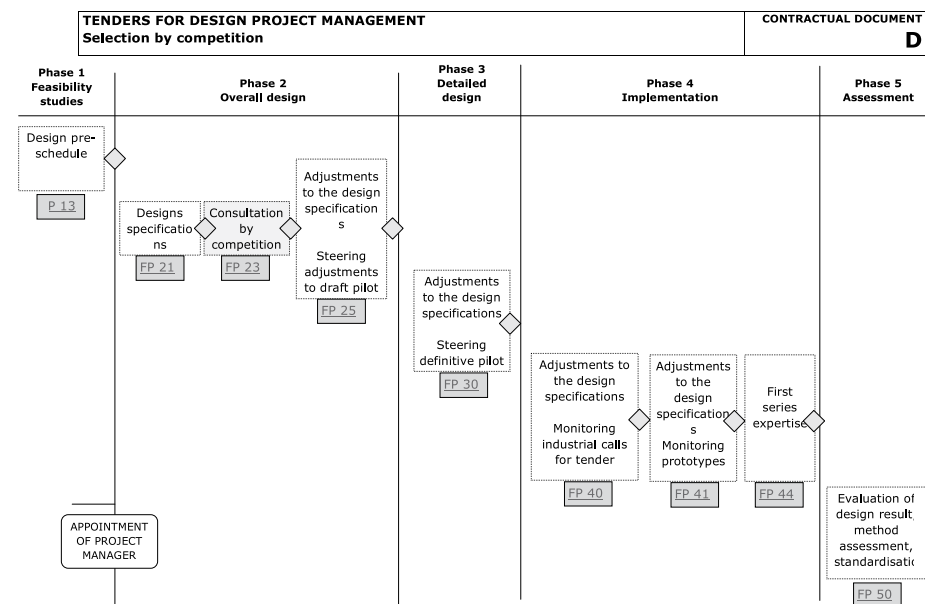Schéma 2.2 : Le jalonnement du projet par les décisions du maître d'ouvrage

Demarcating the project owner's decisions
Project management is the responsibility of the project owner (contracting authority) who must formally approve all the main stages of the project

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[11] *Ibidem*.
[12] Source: RATP project management plan.

[13] Project Management Plan/Design Management RATP/ETI/DPC 2007 (A. Bigand, P. Agnello)

TENDERS FOR DESIGN PROJECT MANAGEMENT	CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENT D
Selection by competition	

Phase 1
Feasibility
studies

Project phase	Support services	Deliverables	Time spent and deadlines
PHASE 1 FEASIBILITY STUDIES	**Drawing up the design pre-schedule** based on the design strategy Integration into the operation's pre-schedule after validation by the project owner.	Pre-schedule design	
PHASE 2 OVERALL DESIGN STAGE	**Drawing up the design specifications** based on the design pre-schedule Integration to the specifications/schedule after validation by the project owner.	Design specifications	
	Steering the competition on behalf of the project manager Establishing the competition together with the project buyer Recommendations for selecting the teams eligible to compete Organisation of the technical committee and the jury Proposals analysed by the technical committee Participation in the jury to select the winning bid Contract drawn up with the project buyer for the winning team.	Competition file Recommendation memo Report analysing the bids Contract for the winning team *Design teams present draft pilot study*	
	Possible adjustments to the design specifications depending on the proposal selected Integration to the specifications/schedule after validation by the project owner.	Adjustments added to the design specifications	
	Steering the design team for the draft pilot study Expertise regarding proposals and assistance to project manager for selecting the solution according to the image and usage/cost report.	Expertise memos *Design team's adjusted draft pilot study*	
PHASE 3 DETAILED DESIGN STAGE	**Possible adjustments to the design specifications** depending on the draft pilot study Integration to the detailed specifications/schedule of the operation after validation by the project owner.	Adjustments added to the design specifications	
	Steering the design team to draw up the definitive pilot study Project manager provides expertise on fine-tuning and assistance in the choices and decisions according to the image and usage/cost report.	Expertise memos, *Design team's definitive pilot study*	

TENDERS FOR DESIGN PROJECT MANAGEMENT	CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENT D
Selection by competition	

Phase 1
Feasibility
studies

Project phase	Support services	Deliverables	Time spent and deadlines
PHASE 4 IMPLEMENTATION	**Possible adjustments to the design specifications** depending on the definitive pilot study finalisations Integration to the final specifications/schedule for the operation after validation by the project owner.	Adjustments added to the design specifications	
	Following up the industrial bids for tender Steering the design team to draw up the technical conditions for the design contract Contribution to the project owner's consultation document Analysis of bids by the technical committee from the design point of view	*Technical conditions for the design team's contract* Design clauses in the consultation document Analysis of bids from the design point of view	
	Possible adjustments to the design specifications depending on the industrial-level decisions. Integration to the finalised specifications/schedule for the operation after validation by the project owner.	Adjustments added to the design specifications	
	Monitoring industrial production (prototypes and first series), Assisting the design team in its expertise assignment and the project manager in the choices and decisions according to the image and usage/cost report.	Expertise memos	
PHASE 5 LAUNCH AND EVALUATION	**Evaluation** of the design result, methods and tools.	Qualitative feedback Methodological feedback	

Birth of a Project

These standard charts reveal two central problems related to our subject. One is encouraging, whereas the other is less so. The role given to the project owner is vast and adapted to the various phases. The results are palpable in terms of project control and reorientation, right up to the industrial production phase. In addition to the stop-and-go imperatives, every stage allows for the detailed readjustments and realignments so dear to sociologists!

This is demonstrated in the successive tram stop design phases for the T3 Paris tramway line (Wilmotte agency).

Draft phase (presented at the competition):

Studies (APS/APD // D1 > D3)

The "T" totem has disappeared, as has the film on the glass walls. These have been reduced and interact with a barrier open to the city.

Series (> D5)

The technical cabinets have been added, the signage and passenger information systems adjusted, and the curbed barrier (suggested in the draft phase) has been discarded.

However, far from this subtle project owner/project manager intervention, there lies a singular shady area from the very birth of the project. To retrace the stages backwards: the quality of mass production depends on the quality of the prototype, which in turn depends on the quality of work supplied by the manufacturer and/or the designer, which depends on the wording of the specifications.

Yet the specifications, which are the basis of a successful design project, also depend on the quality of the feasibility studies or even earlier studies, where it is still difficult to see how they fit in to the project[14] . The very area in which sociology should intervene (initial studies) and work with the designer (feasibility studies) is composed of the haziest stages that are the hardest to identify and situate in the project management process.

From Theory to Difficulties on the Field

Experience has shown that often the urgency of an identified need makes it necessary to skip one or even two of these stages by immediately seeking to formulate "the correct response" within the framework of the project outline, rather than begin by trying to ask the right question. The project then follows its course a frenzied pace and as often as not leads to solid functional solutions based on the experience of the actors in charge. However, all that leaves any hope of urban integration, social values (eco-design/public, rather than shared

space, etc.) and usage studies at the core a project from beginning to end, a very long way from becoming an established reality. The role given to sensitive, and not merely aesthetic, architecture, which co-produces urbanity and is located before stage D0 and right up to the beginning of stage D1, is often neglected or forgotten.

3. A hybrid space: "mild" pragmatism and the position of design

How then should the urgency inherent in project timing be reconciled with survey logic in the field and the broader use of sociology? We have tried to demonstrate how sociology sheds light on the understanding of the stakes and issues for the designer overseeing the creative act. This is such an important and complex issue that a colloquium was held on the subject in Cerisy-la-Salle (in 2005) entitled "Design: caught between urgency and anticipation".

Pragmatism and Risk Analysis

A first answer might lie in the emergence of new skills in the corporate world, or at least their greater use and structure in decision-making positions.

We have seen how, in theory at least, the time spent in initiation or feasibility studies, is a determining factor in the life of a project and whether or not it goes on to the investment stage, making it possible to anticipate any inherent risk in the creation process.

In numerous corporations, including the RATP, the structure of cross-functional risk analysis units is,

we believe, significant. Should we see this as implying greater responsibility in project management or as the creation of a mandatory tool to offset the shortcomings in the duration and recurrence of a given phenomenon? True, risk analysis intervenes from beginning to end in a project. However, it is only relevant if it intervenes forcefully from the investment opportunity decision-making stage — meaning if it has been thought out and requested far earlier on than this decisive stage.

Initiation studies carried out by the project owner should therefore form the first phase of the risk analysis project. They should identify the multi-focal risks, including economic and operational ones of course, but also institutional, social and usage.

But sociology, often reduced to a succinct study of general social frameworks within the project logic (the socio-occupational category, depending on mobility or territory) can provide a detailed analysis of situations and the distribution of focused attention. It emphasises that the very quality of situational knowledge formed within a space in motion, depends on two related factors: the capacity of the place to channel flows and distribute perceptive holds for passengers, as well as its ability to connect the thresholds and services provided. Social sciences therefore, though polysemy and the different viewpoints they bring to a scene, set the design work in a particular location while unfolding it.

The same logic emerges in the "mild pragmatism" requested by J.P. Thibaud[15] in his analyses for designers of space, and the "pragmatism of design" demanded by A. Findeli[16] : to define frameworks of surveys, on the fringes of the scientific work but under its benevolent control, that are limited in time and are at the service of an identified objective. A survey lasting several weeks or months, depending on the complexity of the location, and using tried and tested methodologies, will only partially feed the sciences. But neither will it betray them, and it will shed light on the project in its entirety, in a similar way to risk analysis.

Usage, Design and Conception

Design knowledge also naturally lends itself

to the hybridization of language. Designers possess knowledge and vocabularies, connecting worlds that are often in competition or ignorant of each other's existence (engineers, planners, maintenance staff, artists). In essence they integrate the consequences of usage into their design work, which they relate to man/object or man/space interaction. However, there is generally a lack of time for permeating the landscape with uses before the specification and design period.

Yet that is a fundamental stage and invariably influences the final outcome, as well as the sequences of actions it articulates. From the home screens of automatic ticket vending machines asking users to select an action (the purchase of a single ticket, book of tickets, season ticket, zone selection, etc.) or the language to use, to the drawing of "contactless" control barriers, which are never really thought out for passing luggage, these are all real-life situations resulting from the lack of introductory social surveys, where the design of a niche object set in the fold between space and motion, is preferred over the conception of usage in the form of an object articulated in space .

Survey, Anticipate, Innovate

Within the framework of project leadership, the survey time must therefore be understood as a time of anticipation and innovation. We will not discuss technical innovation here, or the new paradigms of connected mobility that stage the enhanced pedestrian. We will modestly restrict ourselves to reminding the designers that the quality of the initial study has a direct impact on the quality of the integration and usage of a component within a place as well as on the very quality of the place in question.

Since so many projects are led for repair purposes, the survey should, in so far as possible, anticipate medium-term usage conflicts and carry out preventative amendments to daily obstacles.

Innovation should be innovation in interpreting space, usage and temporality. Instead of celebrating a somewhat anecdotal contemporaneousness, social sciences would help the designer to co-produce Baudelairian modernity, and capture the discourse of the period in such a way as to achieve timelessness.

14 Depending on the company, initial studies lie in the realm of the R&D, forecasting or marketing departments. But to my knowledge, no project management training really attempts to find out how these link up with the Do stage: the launching of feasibility studies leading to the start of the project as such and the appointment of the project leader (D1).

15 Jean-Paul Thibaud, in Espinasse, Catherine, Kaminagai, Yo, Milon, Alain, Le Mouël, Eloi (2009), Intervention « Habiter la Ville en Passant », op. cit.
16 Alain Findeli, in Educational meeting about Research in Design / Institut de Recherche en Design, Haute École d'Art et de Design, Geneva / Honor Guest – January 2009

(Left) Adaptation of vocabularies of modernity in different eras. Left: a Guimard metro entrance with its dragonfly design from the early 20th century (reinstalled in 1999). This audacious aesthetic design was controversial in its time and remains perfectly operational to this day. Right: J.M. Othoniel's Kiosque des Noctambules ("the night owl's pavilion"), also an audacious and controversial figure in our own century and one that will probably still be operational in 100 years' time.

The consequences taking use into account (or not) when designing co-acted space. (Clockwise from left to right) The diffusion of the journey narrative (1992); the distribution of perceptive holds provided by a resource space for the users' understanding (2009); and a co-built space that is both urban and human (the Luxembourg mass-transit RER station in Paris dedicated to sustainable development and urban ecology – the "Correspondances" exhibition by Margella G. Sola and Romain Osi, with texts by Italo Calvino, 2007)

The first innovation should thus be to create a hybrid space-time in which sociologists and designers could act together and interact. The sociologists would enlighten the designers about the complexities of users in motion — who in turn would no longer be reduced to the sole role of "end customer"— while the designers would inspire and guide the survey in the field towards the permanent act of conceiving the product-actor.

Conclusion

To conclude it seems to me that designers of functional and sensitive space, be they architects, planners or designers, should think of themselves as "weavers "of skills. Here lies the heart of Edith Heurgon's "co" (or cum) logic[17] : co-production, co-construction, cooperation, co-activity, etc.

The designers' responsibility is two-fold. They must be facilitators of the process within (or alongside) companies by understanding, translating, and co-setting out the discourses and values of the numerous and varied professions[18] . But they must also be the guardians of the time of the preparatory project survey, which is both incompressible and finite. They are the actors par excellence who enable the survey and the design to connect as the two related moments of a same story, with same intention, and breathing as one.

What social sciences in general and action-related sociology in particular can bring, so long as they agree to take into account the staged temporality of projects, could be decisive. Amongst other things they could produce financial benefits, risk limitation, and the integration of projects into existing contexts.

Furthermore the humanities and social sciences could convey values to the heart of a project that are sometimes difficult to extract. Design coupled with action-related sociology could be described as "meaning enhancers" of design logic.

Working as a co-production would certainly allow the humane to emerge in space, and begin a complex but founding process for urbanity (although this is not a given) that would help substitute the "civility/urbanism" tandem, which is the lowest common denominator for living together in shared space, with the "urbanity/aware-citizenship" one[19] , constituent of public space. It would favour the accomplishment of a public service ambition, enrich the ties already made, "weave together the two threads of urban sociality and citizenship and (...) invite us to look closer to home for identifying a new form of social cohesion, in the very configuration of our encounters and the use of our trajectories, despite everything being done to jeopardise it"[20].

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[18] Note that the recent establishment within the RATP of a project ownership department containing a unit in charge of the design and identity of spaces, is a significant event. It reveals a strong desire to carry out change at two related levels: skills, knowledge, process/HR and management. This is an attempt to weave skills, vocabularies, cultures and horizons together at the service of space design, which should be subtly transformed as a result.

[19] Joseph, Isaac (1993), Du bon usage de l'école de Chicago, op. cit.

[20] Roman, Joël (1993), Ville, exclusion et citoyenneté, Paris, Seuil-Esprit, p.19.

"I do not think that power can be delegated because I believe that genuine power is capacity."

FOLLETT 1925, IN GRAHAM 1995 P.111

"It is possible to develop the conception of power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power."

IBID P.10

Designers Dancing with(in) Hierarchies: The Importance of Non-Hierarchical Power for Design Integration and Implementation

ULLA JOHANSSON

& JILL WOODILLA

Abstract

Organizations, in order to take advantage of the specific competence of designers, need to change their members' hierarchical thinking and notion of power. We introduce Mary Parker Follett's theoretical power discourse, developed in the 1920s, to demonstrate an alternative view of power to classical management thinking, and relate Follett's notion of power with the characteristics of designers' competence. We suggest that one reason for the practical difficulties of integrating design as a strategic resource may be difficulties of doing creative work within a hierarchical organization. Instead, we propose that managers and designers together develop an appreciation for a circular response and following "the law of the situation".

Nadine Wiechers & Pavlina Gkigkilini

Designers Dancing with(in) Hierarchies: The Importance of Non-Hierarchical Power for Design Integration and Implementation

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Many design management researchers have observed that top management's attitudes and relations towards design are extremely important (Borja de Mozota 2003, Bruce&Cooper 1997, Svengren 1995). Others have highlighted problems of communication between designers and other professional groups within the design management discourse (Johansson & Svengren 2008).

Relations between the designers' discourse and the discourse of other professional groups that interface with designers are a source of possibilities and problems: Possibilities in the sense that designers often influence colleagues in a positive way, but problems because there is often resistance or other obstacles that result in design(ers) influencing the situation less than they otherwise might wish to do (Johansson 2006a, Johansson & Svengren 2008).

How might the organizational setting adapt so as to take advantage of the resources potentially provided by design? This question arises from the knowledge that design is often an underused resource as well as a great potential for industrial growth. Many dimensions of organizational change and adaptation might be beneficial. Here, we focus on power relations, and discuss the possibilities of non hierarchical power and what that concept might mean to the relations between designers and other organizational professionals.

We start by acknowledging Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933), suggesting that Follett's organizational views constitute a discourse relevant to designers and design management, and, specifically, that the form of non-hierarchical power she proposed may be a necessity for designers' work. Follett described power as an energy that emanated from the circular response between people and ideas, so that power was non-hierarchical in the sense that it was not "power over another person" but rather "joint power over the situation"

(Metcalf & Urwick 1941, pp. 95-116). Today, designers often claim they have no power, or that they do not fit into the corporate culture and that their ideas are not heeded.[1] It may be that they feel this way because their method of working requires something other than a traditional hierarchical environment. One such alternative arrangement might include non-hierarchical power relations of the kind that Follett proposed.

In this paper we review the discourse of Follett and her followers on non-hierarchical power, and problemetize the relationship between Follett and the design discourse. We suggest that a Follettian framework would provide both designers and managers with a platform for communication and mutual understanding.

In closing, drawing on a metaphor of dance, we envision different styles and rhythms for partnerships between designers and managers.

The Depth and Breadth of Follett's Work

Mary Parker Follett was born in 1868 into comfortable circumstances, and lived in Boston, U.S. By the time she died in 1933 she had written a number of books, first in the fields of politics and public administration, and later in industrial management.[2] The shift from political science to business management came from her experiences with the Boston Placement Bureau and Minimum Wage Board, and provided her with the intellectual stimulus to develop her concept of integrating opposing points of view for overall control of the whole situation (Parker 1984).

Like many intellectuals of her time, Follett had a broad understanding of different intellectual streams (O'Connor 2000). Most often she used arguments based in psychology or philosophy. In psychology she drew from German Gestalt therapy, and her view of the human being as a holistic entity was the ground for all her thinking on human relations and her concept of circular response. In philosophy, Whitehead and Hegel had the strongest influence on Follett. Whitehead's process philosophy, stressing "becoming" over "being", underlay the Gestalt therapy mentioned above. From the Hegelian perspective, Follett took the dialectic view that she later used as a base for

her discussion of conflicts (Ryan & Rutherford 2000). Conflicts, according to Follett, are a source of dynamic development where new *integrations* (or *synthesis* in Hegelian terms) are made.

Follett never labelled herself a feminist (Morton & Lindquist 1997). She was not a part of the suffragette movement of that time, but, instead, was active in a number of causes concerning opportunities for girls and women. However, a gender neutral perspective does not create a fair representation of her. If Follett had been a man she would not have done the voluntary social welfare work that was an important grounding for her holistic world-view. Most likely she would have needed an academic position as professor for her reading and writing, rather than being able to do it because of her financial independence. And that in turn might have changed the way followers related to her and her work.

Mary Parker Follett had neither strong opponents nor devoted disciples,[3] something that distinguished her from her contemporary, Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915), often called "the father of scientific management", who had plenty of both. This may be one reason why she and her theories were almost forgotten for several decades after her death. Another reason might be that there were no grounds for integrative and holistic views in the US during the eras of World War II and the Cold War (Drucker 1995). These reasons, as Kanter (1995) points out, are not unrelated to gender. The ways of holistic thinking, including merging private and professional spheres, integrating ethics into one's whole life, and bringing citizenship into the company, are ideas that later were labelled women's culture (Morton & Lindquist 1997). Both cultural feminism and radical feminism have taken as a point of departure that women's culture has been underprivileged and silenced in favour of male culture (see, for example, Tong 1998). Thus both the political and social environment may have contributed to the fact that Follett's ideas were not included and debated as part of the development of management theory until the latter twentieth century.

Follett's ideas were not totally forgotten.[4] Her concepts and ways of thinking have had a revival following a compilation of her writings with comments by leading contempo-

rary management scholars, *Mary Parker Follett – Prophet of Management* (Graham, Ed. 1995). Over the last decade, Follett has been related to recent streams of thought and management practices, including: Chaos and complexity theory (Mendenhall, Macomber & Cutright 2000), empowerment (Eylon 1998), lifelong learning (Salimath & Lemak 2004), organizational justice (Barclay 2005), stakeholder theory (Schilling 2000).

At first glance Follett has nothing to do with design. Her ideas are applicable to many different organizational settings but she did not write about or have any known interest in design. How ever, our interest is specifically in organizational power and here Follett's notions of non-hierarchical power have special relevance to working relationships of industrial designers. Once one grasps the fundamentally different perspective that Follett brings to an organizational reality based on the rigidities of a hierarchically structured power system, her view of the creative process and description of integrative ways of working mesh seamlessly with a view of design as a method of working that is less analytical and more iterative and holistic in comparison with social science and technical work.

To bring Follett's ideas into the purview of industrial designers, we first present the foundational aspects of Follett's view of power, using her own words, because our arguments depend on a grasp of the depth and breadth of her ideas. We follow by articulating our assumptions about design and design work as necessary for our third section that interprets the nature and importance of Follett's ideas for designers and design management today. We conclude by reflecting on discursive elements of relationships between management theorists and designers, and how these relationships may be symbolized metaphorically.

Follett's Notion of Power

Follett's notion of power is interesting for many reasons. It was grounded in a democratic view of society, stressing freedom over repression. As a non-hierarchical view, it stands in contrast to most managerial views of organizations that presuppose a hierarchy.

To Follett, power was more equivalent to capacity, as an ability to be receptive, than to control or coercion. Power was something that enabled actions and provided freedom rather than repression. From her social liberal and democratic standpoint, it was important that "power of the individual" did not constrain other people's freedom. With this view she bridged and constantly moved between the individualist and collectivist perspectives (Ryan & Rutherford 2000).

"The Circular Response" Perspective– a Relativist and Relational View Upon Human Relations and Organizational Change

The most fundamental about all this is that reaction is always reaction to a relating...I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me... that is, in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different. It begins even before we meet, in the anticipation of meeting...it is I plus the-interweaving-between-you-and-me meeting you plus the-interweaving-between-you-and-me, etc. It we were doing it mathematically we should work it out to the nth power. (Follett, 1924, Creative Experience, New York: Longmans Green, reprinted in Graham, 1995 pp.41-42).

The relational view that people were not something separate in themselves, but rather something in relation to other people, was the ground for Follett's thinking about both people and organizations. She gave the example that you might be one character with one person, but not the same with another one – you are and become in relation to other people. This relational view, which Follett combined with a holistic view, was also applied to organizational reality. She saw organizations as something constantly changing, and in a non-technical way described principles of non-liner dynamics in social systems (Mendenhall, Macomber & Cutright 2000). She viewed all interactions as having a potential for every participant to affect every other participant in the organization, whether the person was aware of it or not – a view that was quite different from the prevalent one of direct one-to-one cause and effect.

"Power With" Instead of "Power Over" Another Person

We should learn to distinguish between different kinds of power...It seems to me that whereas power usually means power-over, the power of some person or group over some other person or group, it is possible to develop the conception of power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power... I do not think the management should have power over the workmen, or the workmen over the management. (Follett, 1925, paper presented before a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference group, reprinted in Graham, 1995, p.103)

Power is self-developing capacity. (*ibid*, p.113)

How to reduce power-over... One way of reducing power-over is through integration. Follett was in opposition both to the conservative and the Marxist movements, and therefore saw "power over" another person as something that was to be avoided. She even said that "one person should not give orders to another one" (Follett 1926), thereby constructing the world as a non-hierarchical one. Instead of having "power over" another person, you should have "power with" or shared power.

This strong emphasis on "power with" or shared power gave Follett a particular view of delegation. Delegation was often–and is still–seen as a commodifying activity (Johansson 1998), where authority and power are moved from one person to another. Follett commented that such is not necessary the case. You can delegate power without losing it by sharing the power. The crucial thing, Johansson says, is that power does not have the character of a commodity of a given size that can be moved back and forth, as does delegation. Rather, power has characteristics similar to feelings or emotions (of hate or love, for example) that can be expanded and therefore does not necessarily leave one person because it is given to another. Follett describes that characteristic of power as one of "capacity".

I do not think that power can be delegated because I believe that genuine power is capacity. To confer power on the workers may be an empty gesture. The main problem of the workers is by no means how much control they can wrest from

capital or management, often as we hear that stated; that would be a merely nominal authority and would slip quickly from their grasp. Their problem is how much power they can themselves grow. (Follett, 1925, paper presented before a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference group. Reprinted in Graham, 1995, p.111)

In hierarchical organizations, power is distributed to positions rather than to persons. This is the foundation of Weberian organizational theory. Follett had a very different idea of power. She started with power as a force and a capacity. Delegating power therefore became a complex process. Power could be delegated yet still held by the person, but delegation also needed to be accompanied with capacity or ability.

The Law of the Situation Power Over the Situation Instead of Power Over Other People

I think the solution is...to depersonalize the matter, to unite those concerned in a study of the situation, to see what the situation demands, to discover the law of the situation and obey that. That is, it should not be a case of one person giving commands to another person. Whenever it is obvious that the order arises from the situation, the question of someone commanding and someone obeying does not come up. Both expect what the situation demands. (Follett, 1933, paper delivered to the newly formed Department of Business Administration at the London School of Economics. Reprinted in Graham, 1995, p.128)

Follett frequently referred to "the law of the situation", "to see what the situation demands", or "discover the order integral to a particular situation". Her approach was the opposite of Frederick Taylor's (1911) universal principles that neglected the situation at hand and demanded that workers rely on orders and instructions. Follett, on the other hand, said that the situation at hand had precedence over principles. Furthermore, what is required for the situation at hand should be the ultimate order, with priority over other orders.

Follett also referred to the "power over the situation" as collective power. Here, instead of trying to get or give power between people, or competing for power, we turn to the situation "at hand" – the one that we are in together – and try to develop

(joint) power over the situation.

The concept of "power over the situation" therefore becomes an alternative to the individual competition that is paramount in most organizations today.

"Dynamic Conflicts" Conflicts as the Ground for Creative Development

There is a way beginning now to be recognized at least, and even occasionally followed: when two desires are integrated, that means that a solution has been found in which both desires have found a place, that neither side has had to sacrifice anything. (Follett, 1925, paper first presented before a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference group. Reprinted in Graham, 1995, p.69)

Let us take some very simple illustration. In the Harvard Library one day, in one of the smaller rooms, some one wanted the window open, I wanted it shut. We opened the window in the next room, where no one was sitting. This was not a compromise because there was no curtailing of desire; we both got what we really wanted. For I did not want a closed room, I simply did not want the north wind to blow directly on me; likewise the other occupant did not want that particular window open, he merely wanted more air in the room. (*ibid* p.69)

Follett had a remarkable view of conflict. In contrast to Taylor, who tried to avoid them, Follett saw conflicts as the root of organizational development and something that should be handled openly. She divided conflict resolution into three types: First, domination, which was something negative and related to "power over" rather than her democratic "power with", and second, compromise, which was also something negative because it required curtailing the wish or need of one or all of those involved. The third strategy of conflict resolution she labelled integration, as in her simple example above.

Follett's distinction between compromise and integration is also noteworthy. Her distinction is closely related to Hegelian dialectics where opposite positions may be resolved in synthesis. To reach a synthesis – or integration in Follett's vocabulary – between conflicting persons or organizations, a circular behaviour or response is needed. By looking at the situation at hand and the evolving situation, new

possibilities for creative solutions might appear. In this way, the concepts of power, integration, circular response and the law of the situation are closely related to each other.

Power as Creativity or Capacity to Create New Alternatives

I think we may learn that a jointly developing power means the possibility of creating new values, a wholly different process from the sterile one of balancing. Not to rearrange existing values, but to bring more into existence is the high mission of enlightened human intercourse. (Follett, 1925, pa per presented before a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference group. Reprinted in Graham 1995 p.116)

To confer authority where capacity has not been developed is fatal to both government and business. (*ibid* p.113)

The world of Follett was an ever-changing world, and the situation or the reality at hand was more important than holding onto universal principles. Her reality was a consequence of human interaction, so the very base for power, one could say, was creativity and constant circular response in looking for a more democratic and human world.

Our interpretation of Follett's idea of power is that the line between power and creativity is blurred, making it impossible to separate one from the other. Also creativity for Follett was a mental capacity to create something new, whether it was a new idea or something more tangible. Power then can be seen as what is needed for creativity, a companion for creative thinking, and an outcome from creative thinking, making it possible to find integrative solutions.

Power as Organizing or Collaboration Through Democracy

The fundamental reason for the study of group psychology is that no one can give us democracy, we must learn democracy. To be a democrat is not to decide on a certain form of human association, it is to learn to live with other men. ... The group process contains the secret of collective life, it is the key to

democracy, it is the master lesson for every individual to learn, it is our chief hope for the political, the social, the international life of the future. (Follett, 1920, *The New State: Group organisation, the solution of popular government.* Reprinted in Graham 1995 p.232).

When Follett spoke of groups, she referred to people ("men" in her discussions) "associating under the law of interpenetration, as opposed to the law of the crowd – suggestion and intimidation" (*ibid* p.232). She had witnessed much conflict between labor and capital (or "management" as we would say), and saw these as instances of crowd-like behavior built on conflict and rather than collaboration. Follett stressed collaboration, not just in negotiating agreements, but in a larger synthesis of competition and collaboration in business, where successful businessmen have a trained cooperative intelligence that allows then to unite conclusions of various factions and to work with others to use this material for new actions. Power as the underlying principle of democratic group process was essential for the type of collaboration necessary for business success.

Power as Energy - Including an Emotional Dimension

Power might be defined as simply the ability to make things happen, to be a cause or agent, to initiate change. Perhaps the "urge to power" is merely the satisfaction of being alive...

It has always seen to me that the violinist must get one of the greatest satisfactions of being alive; all of him is enlisted, he surely feels power. Probably the leader of an orchestra feels more. (Follett, 1925, paper presented before a Bureau of Personnel Administration conference group. Reprinted in Graham 1995 p.101)

Power within an organization or between individuals is normally seen as something very different from electrical power. However, embracing Follett's texts on power, we see power as something that has similar characteristics or qualities to electrical power: characteristics of flow, providing energy, and also sustaining activity. Power as energy also contains an emotional dimension

because being full of power or feeling powerless are emotional states. This is a dimension too seldom recognized within the social science power concept.

Summary of Follett's Non-Hierarchical Power Concept

Follett's power concept begins with, and always returns to, the circular response. It is about responding both to the situation at hand and to other people. "Power with" is more important than "power over". Power is related to conflicts, and conflicts should be handled with creativity in order to try to find an integrative solution rather than compromise or domination. Therefore her non-hierarchical power concept is a tool for creative and organizational development.

This is a very different power concept from the one that is taken-for-granted in most corporations and described in management theories.

What is Design ?

In this section we make our view of industrial design explicit before relating the concepts of design and power to each other. The word "design" can take different meanings, sometimes referring to the appearance of an artefact, at other times to the process of fabrication. Among industrial designers as a profession there is a strong focus on both aspects; on the noun and the product as well as the verb and the process. Many design researchers stress this double dimension (Simon 1969/81, Ramirez 1998, Svengren 1995, Johansson 2006b), and we also consider it important.

In Scandinavian popular culture – on TV and in magazines – design refers to exclusivity in form and color, giving the artefact an art-like experience. Julier (2000) uses the phrase *high design*, a concept related not so much to exclusivity per se as a contextual exclusivity – what is perceived as exclusive by a given group at a given time. A similar definition of design is given by the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in the United States, "Whether it's handmade or mass produced high end or low brow, good design is in the eye of the beholder" (www.cooperhewitt.

org). Both definitions focus on the artefact and its relation to the art discourse. A quite different definition covers the design process of engineers, architects, and industrial designers. Herbert Simon (1969/81) discusses design as the creation of "the artificial", something separate from that created by nature and coincidence. Simon characterises the design process as epistemologically separated both from humanistic knowledge (concerned with insights), social sciences (concerned with analytical and critical knowledge) and the sciences (concerned with explanations of what is already existent or theories to be proved or disproved in the future).

Simon's notion of design is related to the etymological definition. In the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) design means "to mark or to point out something", implying that it is something that differs from the surroundings. The lexicon also talks about design as "making a plan or a mental scheme for something to be realized, a preliminary idea, a project" i.e., the sketch of the art piece or building, and to "signify, stand for" i.e. being different and standing out from the context – a definition that applies to design from a marketing perspective. In the latter meaning the word design has been used in the English language since the renaissance and this is, according to Julier (2000), still the basis when discussing strategy and differentiation within industrial design. The dictionary notes that, from available records, the verb was used about 300 years before the noun came into use.

Designers, whose products are exposed and visible, frequently relate themselves to invisibility. The design process might be the reason for this, as Johansson and Svengren (2008) discuss, pointing out that designers often talk about themselves as invisible in a way that resembles feminist theories about invisibility:

No one can reasonably state that design in itself is invisible. On the contrary, it is the design and the exterior form that first appear when we approach a product, for example a mobile phone, rather than the interior technical qualities. Though design in many ways is so visible that it shouts towards us in the public space, we would argue that the design process and its importance is not recognized enough by management. To a certain degree there is reason to believe that it is due to the discourse of

the design area itself. (pp. 6-7)

Many design researchers claim that design cannot be described, defined, or understood in the same way as knowledge from the social sciences, the humanities, or the natural sciences. Similarly, both Simon (1969/81) and Ramirez (1998) claim that design competence and design knowledge are difficult to place within these epistemologies or within most common perceptions of knowledge and what constitutes knowledge. One reason for this might be the close connection of design to visibility, and that the message from pictures and other visible expressions are less discursive than verbal expressions. So the visibility makes the designer visible and invisible simultaneously. Describing something verbally is a way to give it a discursive form and make it visible, thereby creating something meaningful. But it is at the same time a matter of separating this meaning from other meanings and creating limitations.

In our own definition of industrial design, we partly follow Monö (1997) who characterises design as a combination of the three dimensions: engineering/production, art/aesthetic, and functional/human aspects. Jan Michl (1995) defines industrial design in the following way:

It is the development and planning of industrially produced products with the aim of making them attractive for the user. The process precedes production and begins with and includes improvements and shaping of the product's functional aspects, user qualities and appearance, and adjusting the product for mass production, distribution and selling. Aesthetic shape of the product is seldom the only contribution but is always counted as important. (Gyldendals Norwegian Dictionary, translation by Johansson)

Design is here about industrially produced products that should be made "attractive for the user". This can be done through making the product more functional, more user-friendly or through its aesthetic, provided there is an adaptation to enable mass production.

However, we also acknowledge design as a process, as a method of working that is less analytical and more iterative and holistic in comparison with social science and technical work (Johansson 2006b).

Managers who cooperate with designers often talk about designers' approach to problem-solving in terms of "design as a way of thinking" – something that relates more to the epistemologi-

cal difference between design and social sciences than to any specific model of working.

Perspectives on the Relationship Between Industrial Designers and Non-Hierarchical Power

What, then, makes Follett ascribable in general to the work of designers? Here we highlight and discuss two perspectives on the relation between Follett's non-hierarchical power and the situation of industrial designers. Our method is a deductive and analytical comparison, or what Glaser and Strauss (1997) label as "armchair research".

Creativity and Chaos Are Oxymoronic to Hierarchy

Follett was one of the first people within management theory who had a specific interest in creativity and organizations. She described how creative activities could not be grasped: *To view from the outside, to dissect it into its different elements, to lay these elements on the dissecting table as so many different individuals, is to kill the life and feed the fancy with dead images, empty, sterile concepts.* (Follett 1918:63)

This quotation, in our interpretation, demonstrates Follett's understanding and interest in the creative process; she catches the integrative way of doing creative work. Her way of thinking and writing about organizations built on a creative perspective of human activities. This was very different, not to say alien, to scientific management and to the hierarchical world of Taylor that became the platform for development of organizations during the 20th century.

How do creativity and chaos relate to each other and to hierarchies? One way is to relate opposites (Saussure 1960); a concept does not mean much by itself, but it creates a meaning when we consider its opposite. For example, white can be understood in relation to black or when considering the many different words that Eskimos have for "snow".

The opposite of hierarchical is not only non-hierarchical but also chaos: a concept that implies the total loss of hierarchy. Chaos and industrial design relate to each other because design is a way

of handling chaos and structuring it. The design process is an iterative process that involves both chaos and structure in a paradoxical way. Two designers of information systems described this paradox as follows:

To formulate a design method is always a delicate task. The purpose is typically to establish some certainty and control in the design process. But this striving for predictability and control is a paradox in design, since in reality the most valued and desirable characteristic of a design process is creativity and thus the ability to find the new and the unexpected, leading to the unpredictability of the design process. When a design process becomes predictable it is no longer a design *process but merely a* building *process.* (Stolterman and Russo 1997)

The word chaos comes from the Greek *khaos* or "abyss, that which gapes wide open, is vast and empty". In modern times, chaos has come to mean a complete lack of structure, a state of utter confusion. In contrast, hierarchy implies structure and order, a state where relationships are known and fixed. Chaos is a force for creativity because it forces the mind to search for patterns – to find order in new ways or to take disparate items and find a pattern within or between them. When random elements are introduced into a situation, or when a whole is taken apart and elements are strewn about randomly, new patterns, or new ways of looking at a problem emerge.

The process used by the American designers, Charles Eames (1907-1978) and his wife Ray Eames (1912-1988) illustrates the creative process and paradoxical relationship of pattern and randomness. As described by Ray Jacobson (2003):

First they decomposed a design program into its myriad components and subcomponents, a hundred subtasks for every major task. Then they analyzed the smallest parts one by one, striving with each successive evaluation to choose the one design alternative that equalled or surpassed in quality the choices made before. Meticulously the Eameses arrived at the nest of the small parts and then, just as rigorously, assembled these unit by unit, until the resulting product represented the sum of a thousand excellent decisions. Paradoxically, the result frequently stunned Charles and Ray themselves, since the effect of their method was indeed often

greater than the sum of its parts.

And yet, the Eameses were also masters of intuition, for the process of taking apart the pieces and putting them back together again was conducted in a context of simple elegance and beauty whose rules resided in their minds alone. If the final products of their labors were honed and fine-tuned to within an inch of excess, still the conception of these products was an act of creation unique to the Eameses' sense of proportion and propriety and their overall genius. (pp.7-8)

The process of design described here resembles Follett's "circular response", the object grew only through its relationship to the part that had been created just before and the part that was in the process of creation. At the same time, the creative process emerged from a state of randomness or chaos, where all the subparts were strewn about, waiting to be formed into new patterns and a new whole. Follett herself might go even further, positing that the creative process could emerge from chaos only when individuals organized themselves in a democratic way, collaborating amongst themselves and with wider stakeholders to engage with design to envision new scenarios or even new futures.

The Designer's Competencies Fragment the Hierarchical Pattern

The designer has a capacity to constantly turn from details to a holistic view and back again in an iterative process that dissolves hierarchy. Three interlinked characteristics of the designers' competence stand in logical opposition to hierarchy: the holistic view, the capacity to turn between the holistic to details and back again like having an instant zoom camera, and the capacity to both structure and dissolve structures (or the capacity to very quickly restructure reality). These three competences are interrelated as different facets of the design competence (Johansson 2006b). They are also all strongly related to Follett's holistic view and her notion of circular response.

Follett's concept of "circular response" and a holistic view of organizations are essential to her organizational construction. They create such a deep-seated foundation that it is worth asking if this is the reason why Follett's organizational view has always been left in the shadows compared to the partitioned and hierarchical organizational construction of scientific management. Circular

response can be seen as the reverse of hierarchy and thereby also to scientific management and the management theories of the twentieth century that either criticise or build on Taylorism. Follett's and Taylor's views are so different in their assumptions about the character of the construction of organizations that they seem impossible to blend.

Whether or not this alternative foundation repressed Follett's theories in favour of Taylor's, Follett and designers have the holistic view in common. Most design schools consider it essential to teach their students to have what Johansson (2006) labels "a zoom-camera" to instantly go between details and holistic views and to see how details can make the whole different. Designers often work with details and are trained to be careful about details. However, they do not stay on the detail level but rather jump between different scales; they zoom in and zoom out as needed.

The holistic view has consequences for the collaboration between designers and other groups such as marketers, engineers, and top management. Designers do not pretend to be experts in either marketing or engineering. However, in order to work with the combination of form and function and take production aspects into account, they need to have sufficient knowledge of other disciplines to be able get help from these other areas. This help cannot be in a hierarchical relationship, because no discipline can be above the other. It is rather a relation like that of consulting – but the question is who is consulting to whom – in the best case it is a mutual consulting and collaboration within what Follett labels as "the law of the situation".

The law of the situation means that participants do not bother about having control over other people, but having control and power over the (common) situation. It means going from a hierarchical view to a view where the problems at hand and their solutions are at the core of the interaction and relationship. This way of looking upon the situation is very similar to what designers describe as their task (Lawson 1997) – they want to solve problems and do not bother about the official rank of different people but rather think only about who can contribute to solving the problem at hand.

For designers, having a holistic approach means that a solution in product development requires change – or influences – from marketing, production, strategy

or other functional areas. When a designer crosses the borders between disciplines, she may find new solutions, but she will also find new conflicts, especially if the unit on the other side of the border has a more hierarchical view. Difficulties that occur when members of design teams collaborate across disciplines are well-recognized. Research has been conducted into collaborative design processes and the integration of both technical and social aspects, and ways in which design team members interactively make sense of a project (Cumming and Akar 2005, Fischer 2004). Much of this research uses hierarchically-related terminology, such as centralization or decentralization, or focuses on computer modelling to approximate the structure and relationships involved. But, we argue, the act of modelling and generalizing itself creates a preferred solution, privileging one above others, and placing certain positions at nodes of communication. Instead, if following Follett, the situation at hand is the focusing element, the solution is always evolving as relationships are created and changed as knowledge is exchanged. The design process is created through non-hierarchical relationships. Or, as Tom Kelley, the general manager of IDEO, has described the ideal designer, among "T-shaped persons", who are deep in at least one field while knowledgeable in many. He describes the process of communication across disciplines as involving empathy, thereby creating understanding without dominance (Kelley & Littman 2005)

Concluding Reflections

The Discursive Triangle of Taylor, Follett and Designers

What then, we ask, are the elements that problemetize the relationship between management and designers so often talked about by practitioners and researchers alike? We believe that a vital perspective for the communication problems so often mentioned is the discursive triangle among the different hierarchical views of Taylor and Follett and how they relate to design competence.

Our first, and not so controversial, claim is that much of the discourse of current management thought and practice (including standardization,

the quality movement, and lean production that are all important to design work) can be traced back to precepts of scientific management and Taylor's way of thinking, as a recycling of ideas that have their root in the management ideas of the beginning of last century. Even those who critique Taylor's work often rely on the discursive grounds of scientific management – including the hierarchical view, the notion of reporting to one boss, and responsibility as something commodified (Johansson 1998). Both those in sharp critique of Taylor's work and those following him like disciples rely on some of his discursive ground of rational thinking, omitting creativity like a cleaned skeleton lacks flesh.

When the management area is the point of departure, Taylor and his discursive followers are not well suited to communicate with the design area. Indeed, designers often complain about the managerial world and its lack of understanding of the requirements and the character of design. Scholars of design and design management often claim that in order to integrate design in a true way, a deep understanding of art and/or design is needed in top management (Borja de Mozota 2003, Bruce and Cooper 1997, Svengren 1995). Design is clearly a powerful factor contributing to innovation (Kelley 2005, Verganti 2006, Von Stamm 2003), yet its crucial work in driving the product development process is often invisible, needing "stealth leadership" (Cooper et al. 2002) to manage the designer-client relationship. In contrast, our claim here is that, in order to take advantage of designers' competences and the potential of design as a strategic asset, managers need to reflect on and find new paths out of the hierarchical prison that can be structural or discursive in its character.

If design and management need to understand each other, we might say that management should always adjust to designers. However, this is not our claim. Rather, managers need to talk with designers and understand design in a different way in order to arrive at a communicative level of mutual understanding. Follett's discourse, which is built upon circular response, creative interaction and non-hierarchical relations that constantly change within the interaction, may be a place to embark for communication between management and design. We also believe that

the discursive character of much of mainstream management thinking is such that creative thinking is repressed. Going even further, which we do not attempt in this paper, a discursive analysis of the communication between designer and manager from a feminist point of view might show that there is a similar repression between the managerial culture and communication as there is between the women's culture and main stream male culture.

The Dance as a Concluding Metaphor

Our analysis can be summarized through the dance metaphor. What sorts of social dances are designers invited to dance within the organizational world? On one hand, we might select the Argentine tango, a complex and creative dance, because it allows both partners to elaborate on their own or to follow the subtle signals of the partner who takes the lead. For the tango, dancers must learn the steps, and also the signals and ways in which elaborations alter the flow of the dance. In performance, the tango is passionate, the mood seductive, and the dancers' moves synchronized and flowing. On the other hand, we might select the square dance, which has a prescribed choreography to be followed. Here dancers rely on the "caller" who manages the interrelationships among the dancers, provided the dancers bring to the dance the capacity to perform the required manoeuvres. When we take the metaphor of social dancing for design management, we sense that the company invites participants to a tango that turns out to be a square dance.

The designer is expected to create and deliver something that is difficult to deliver and even harder to create within a hierarchically constructed organizational world. This constraint puts the designer in a similar situation as women are claimed to be in by feminist researchers – not seen and not being able to exist and perform on their own terms and capacities. Or, even worse, with their capacity and qualities not even seen or recognized. The designer is like the woman in a square dance – someone who has prescribed steps set by the caller and who must look like everyone else. However, if dancing the tango, the

woman is valued for the (dramatic) perspectives she brings to her role in the partnership. Similarly, the hierarchical organization is like a prison for creativity and links between different perspectives and competencies that are a vital part of the design profession.

Designers and managers need not have a choice of only two dance styles. They may decide to form relationships outside of the established choreography, pursuing street dance forms, making creative and original moves, following the latest popular music, taking turns at displaying the individual dancer's prowess to the crowd. Alternatively they may learn informally by watching others, then joining with them to perform a folk dance from the local region. The number of dancers may vary – the line can be short or the circle wide – with the steps and patterns evolving over time, and retained in the local collective memory. Unless performed for tourists, the folk dance takes place as part of the community calendar, with local musicians playing favourite songs and dancers enjoying catching up on the local news while they participate in the dance, each according to his or her own ability.

Designers are not always bound by a hierarchical relationship, as the creative and disruptive work of David Kelley's IDEO has shown. Managers who rely on design consultancies for creative talent on a project-by-project basis may seek an individual designer with a clear sense of direction as a response to the demands of the times. It is probably far more common for both designers and managers to have had little formal training in managing their relationship; instead they learn together as they go, creating patterns and moves that are unique to the local scene.

As management continues to appreciate the competitive advantages offered by design, and design recognizes that its practice cannot contribute from isolation, both disciplines need fresh approaches for collaborative work. We suggest that design and management both follow the lead of Mary Parker Follett, and deliberately value non-hierarchical power in their relationship. A relationship built on non-hierarchical power would put aside the prescribed organization communication patterns and traditional authoritative associations, and instead focus on "circular response" in interactions, where under-

standing of practice continuously evolves based on previous interactions, and follow "the law of the situation". Anarchy would not result – in contrast, very prescribed procedures may be needed at specific times. Reading and talking about Follett's ideas and grappling with how they migh change current practices would be a good beginning.

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NOTES

1.   This observation was made by one of the authors (Johansson) during interviews, group discussions and informal conversations with about 40 Swedish designers as part of her evaluation of the Swedish governments design program. It might not be valid for American designers.

2.   The Speaker of the House of Representatives (Follett 1896), The New State: Group Organization the solution of popular government (Follett 1920), Creative Experience (Follett 1924). In the last years before her death she gave a series of lectures that were compiled posthumously and published as Dynamic Administration edited by Fox and Urwick (1973) and Freedom and Coordination: Lectures in business organizations (Follett 1949).

3.   This is a simplification. British management theorist Lyndall Urwick (1891–1983) is recognized for integrating the ideas of earlier theorists, including Follett, but did not take her ideas further; instead he published them as they were.

4.   Fry and Thomas (2006) found that between 1969 and 1990 Follett was cited in 148 articles written by 129 authors in 96 different journals and periodicals. Follett was also briefly cited in most of the major pre 1978 public administration and management texts. Most of the text references, they claim, cite her in a rather shallow context, without appreciating the implications of her work.

Acknowledgements
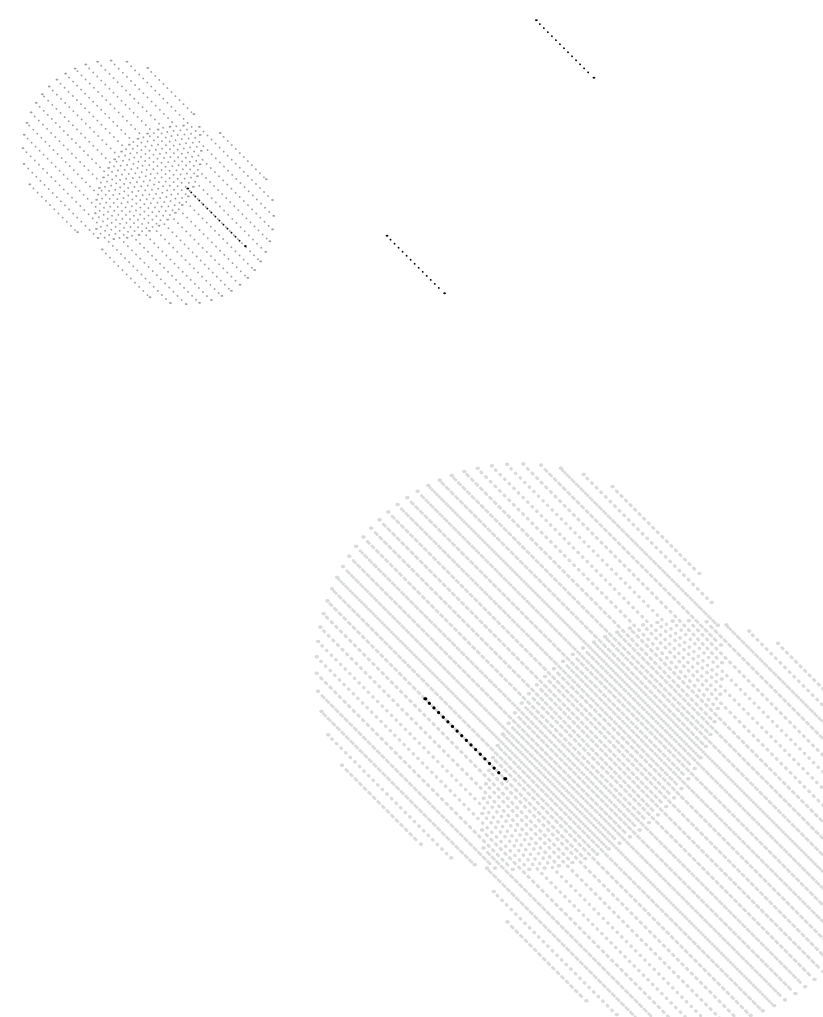
Book Review

The Relationship of Micro-Social Analysis to Design Thinking and Design Processes

ALICE D. PEINADO

Abstract

This short review of two books, Tim Brown's *Change by Design* and Sophie Alami et al's *Les Méthodes Qualitatives*, analyzes how users have been placed at the core of innovative processes today.

Whether we look at Brown's human-centered approach as developed through his company IDEO or Alami *et al*'s research methodology as engaged in through their company Argonautes, the aim is to capture the processes whereby users assign meaning to their everyday interaction with things or other people.

Brown, Tim. *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation.* London: Harper Business, 2009.

Alami, Sophie, Dominique Desjeux and Isabelle Garabuau-Moussaoui. *Les Méthodes Qualitatives*, Collection Que Sais-je. Paris: PUF, 2009.

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The Relationship of Micro-Social Analysis to Design Thinking and Design Processes

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In his latest book, *Change By Design*, Tim Brown, CEO and President of IDEO, lays out his vision of design for the 21st Century. Design, he argues, is moving "upstream" as a discipline (p.7). This is the result of a new understanding of the role design plays within industry and in society at large. The strength of design, he argues, is that it is a project-based activity that focuses on the very processes that define innovation.

Expanding on this idea, Brown states that innovation is understood in terms of three inter-related approaches: inspiration, ideation and implementation (p.16). The design process deals specifically with the feasibility of innovative ideas, their viability and ultimately their desirability (p.18). While feasibility refers to the actual functional potential of an idea and viability to whether it is acceptable within a given business model, desirability is about what makes sense for people as well as the actual needs of people (*Ibid*).

Key here is the "evolution from the creation of products to the analysis of the relationship between people and products, and from there to the analysis between people and people" (p.41-42). The designer's task, therefore, is not simply one of ideation, but also one of observation and translation: translation of observed habits into insights and eventually into new services and products (*Ibid*). The designer's capacity to observe and understand the reality surrounding him or her requires a certain level of emotional understanding and empathy with actual and potential users. For Brown, empathy is defined as "the effort to see the world through the eyes of others, understand the world through their experiences, and feel the world through their emotions" (p.50). To a very large extent, then, Brown's methodological approach to design rests on the social sciences as the basis through which to reach an understanding of and an empathetic relationship to people.
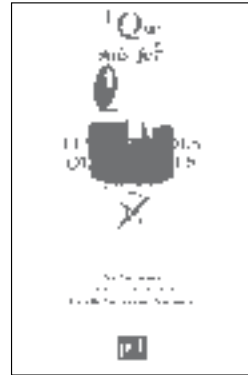
In their collective work on qualitative methods in the social sciences, *Les Méthodes Qualitatives*, Alami *et al* lay out the foundation for a rigorous research methodology enabling us to analyze situations at the micro-social level.

As in Brown's case, Alami's and her co-writers developed their methodology out of a professional concern, that of Argonautes, to elaborate a systematic approach to users' experiences that could then be of use to business as well as other specialists.

The aim of the book is to emphasize the contribution of qualitative alongside quantitative research. They write: "qualitative methods are neither more nor less pertinent than quantitative ones" (p.14). Their relative importance depends on the subject to be investigated; of particular interest to us here are cases where the observer wants to investigate "new, emerging social phenomena"

(*Ibid*). Moreover, as they are "impressionistic" in character, they can easily "reveal, by small touches, the social environment in its entirety, the system of actions or social games" (p.15).

The aim here is to grasp the sense of an action – the meaning inherent to the actual practices observed – by taking into consideration the multiplicity of occurrences that characterize daily life. Such an approach is not an easy one to either carry out or sell to others. This is because it does not rest on the strength of numbers, but on a more subtle understanding of what constitutes real, lived experience – an inductive as opposed to a deductive understanding that bases itself on an exploration of everyday facts (p.25).

The works of Brown and Alami *et al* are complementary to each other. The former represents a designer's approach to the constraints of innovation within a man-made and governed world, while the latter attempts to develop an answer to these constraints. In so doing, it carefully lays out a methodological approach that takes into consideration how meaning emerges in social settings. Alami and her co-writers write how their clients are often interested in gaining a better understanding of their customers in terms of "society or given social groups [...] or with respect to the social practices and uses linked to specific objects" (p.31). Brown emphasizes the importance of the "design experience" where "people shift from passive consumption to active participation" (p.110). Designing with such an aim in mind requires a thorough understanding of how users perceive and approach design products and/or services. It is not enough to identify needs through quantitative analytical approaches. Today, according to Brown, it is necessary to involve the users in the ideation process from the very beginning. This is because design engages "our emotions" through an "intrinsically human-centered" approach (*Idem*, p.115). To Brown's call for the integration of qualitative approaches in the design process, Alami *et al* respond by developing a systematic field methodology for qualitative analysis where the subject of study will vary depending on the nature of the field itself (p.77). Here, "adaptability, flexibility and pliability are precious skills" to have (*Ibid*).

How, then, do we represent social facts to ourselves? This is a key question that a micro-social analysis of things and people can answer. To this end, *Les Méthodes Qualitatives* provides a manual for would-be sociologists and anthropologists interested in engaging in careers as consultants in a professional setting. In this respect, it is full of useful information about how to approach potential clients, develop a brief and eventually communicate the results of one's findings in a meaningful way. *Change By Design* is also conceived as a manual for introducing the layman to the seemingly arcane processes proper to design thinking. Everybody, Brown seems to argue, can develop a "design thinking" approach – this is no longer only the purview of designers. In order to do so, it is necessary to adopt a human-centered approach that puts users at the center of the design process. This necessarily sends us back to a cultural and social understanding of men and women in real-life situations. In more than one respect, then, each book reflects in its own right the profound imprint that the social sciences, and sociology and anthropology in particular, are having on innovation processes today.

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