


Territorial design: ethological design or political design or both?

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Abstract

Based on 4 codesign cases and 15 designer interviews, this article presents how territorial design serves as a catalyst for shared values in community living. Examining user experience and design goals, it reveals how ethological and political values shape territories and the design process. Participants explore new work methodologies, redefine collective activities and navigate in tensions, power issues and political dimensions. The codesign space transforms political interactions, shifting from controversy to conception, offering a new experience and perspective on territorial discussions.

Keywords: co-design, value-driven design, territorial design, policy making, design management

1. Introduction

Participatory design, that involves non-designers in the design process, provides information on user needs (Vines et al., 2013), enables ideas to be generated, concepts to be developed, (Sanders and Stappers, 2018), and "matters of concern" to be discussed (Björqvinnsson et al., 2010), is now applied to design and innovation activities addressing issues at the territorial level. Design of and for territories is a recent field of design practices still under construction (Jolivet-Duval et al., 2021; Bason, 2014). For Gwiazdzinski, (2015) "*Territorial design*" refers to the capacity to transform public modalities of action. Atzili and Kadercan (2017) define "territorial designs" as a framework for research. They consider territorial design as a process by which elites, in interaction with their own society and external environment (local structures and global ones), intentionally and systematically constitute and institutionalize diverse forms of territoriality, and thus territories. From a political geography standpoint, in particular Cox (2001; 2002) "place matters" in territorial design or "territorial re-design". Including "electoral districting, the design of service areas, spatial planning, and more", territorial design is not socially neutral because geography can favor certain groups over others, leading to the politics of places and spaces. Poudray et al. (2018) point out that territorial design is based on citizen participation and tools that empower participants to act in their environments. Duhem and Pereira de Moura (2020) rather use "*Design of territories*" to claim a reterritorialization of the act of design that restores and supports the relationship between inhabitants and their living spaces. Finally, "*design for territories*" (Parente, 2016) defines local activities as improving the urban, rural, and natural environments with the participation of local communities. All definitions emphasize that stakeholder's participation is a prerequisite for the success of the design project making it clear that "*Territorial design*" comes from "*participatory design*" (Sanders, Brandt, and Binder, 2010, p.195). However, the emphasis is either on the locality of the actors (for a situated design), the fact that these participants are also citizens and therefore participate in the political debate and change the balance of power, or that public services and traditional public management is in transition trying new ways to define and implement public policies. In any event, local and regional public actors recruit designers and use design methods for a wide range of innovation projects (Bonin and Folléa, 2018) taking advantage of different design registers: space,

form, product, graphic, service, game, process, system, landscape (Hémon et al., 2023). This diversity of definitions and practices reflects the polysemy of the concept of territory itself. The word territory, whose Latin etymology refers to terra - land - is defined by its connection to a spatial area “a part of earth’s surface” (Debarbieux, 1999, p. 33). However, “it has developed a legal-political meaning (State territory), then [...] an ethological meaning (the area occupied by an animal or a group of animals).” (Debarbieux, 1999, p. 34) These epistemological traditions are used differently by Anglo-Saxon and French researchers. In the dictionary of public policy, referring to France, Faure and Négrier point out that from the 19th century, the concept was developed mostly in political science: “Territory is seen from a military point of view, a unified and structured view of the nation on the administrative level”. We see a “real republican dramatization of the national territory, in the form of a grand narrative in which social roles are staged and an aesthetic logic composed of forms (communes, districts...) and resources (administrations, competences, prefects...) is imposed” (Faure and Négrier, 2019). According to Debarbieux, Anglo-Saxon literature has long preferred the ethological dimension. Today, the two epistemological traditions are united around the territory considered as an anthropized geographical space where the political and the ethological come together. Other dimensions have been added to complete the definition: the dimensions of representation, communication, and the imaginary. In the words of Raffestin (1987), human territoriality is “the conjunction of a territorial process with an informational process”. The physical occupation and exploitation of space by human societies go hand in hand with the representations (cognitive and material) of territorial processes, which, in turn, influence their evolution. The territory as a space that is subject to communication and that structures it, is also a category that supports the imaginary. This opens the possibility of not only changing the material elements of a specific place but also of working on its symbolic dimensions.

In this paper, we focus on how designers work with representations and experiences of the territory and how these representations and experiences are structured by values. Delahais et al, (2021) remind us that “the term “value” refers not only to the cost of a thing but also to the relevance it has”. The notion of value is to be distinguished from the norm (Iversen et al., 2010; Heinich, 2020) because even though it defines “what a person or a group of people consider important in life”, they are a matter of choice (Iversen et al., 2010) and can also be the result of a desire (Rokeach, 1973; Greimas, 1970, p.21). While values can be highly personal, they are also negotiated with other systems of values and can be supported by public or legal institutions or the market as pointed out by Heinich (2020) Values have become an important topic in design, as they embody ideas and qualities that people consider important and worth pursuing and achieving. Since Friedman's writings on value-sensitive design, design research has focused on how designers start projects with certain values and integrate them into artifacts (Friedman, 1996; Hatchuel, 2005; Heinich, 2020; Molnar and Palmas, 2021).

In this research, we wanted to discover if designing for territories always involved certain types of values. While contemporary design practices mostly developed within an economic framework and have been used to produce industrial products and commercial services in a context of innovation with industrial actors and consumers (Heskett, 2002), design methods have evolved with the arrival of new types of actors (hospitals, associations, etc.) who needed to identify ways of helping new types of users (patients, carers, residents) and supported new value systems. Social design seeks to make its contribution to solving complex social problems and guiding social change processes towards sustainability (Manzini, 2019).

Our hypothesis is that the values shaping territorial design when citizens explore legitimately together new ways of living together are different from those when stakeholders are led by an economic actor who ultimately aligns values around a product or service. Based on our understanding of the concept of territory, our hypothesis is that territorial design probably deals with ethological as well as political values reflecting the human way of relating to a certain space.

After presenting our methodology based on four territorial design projects and a series of 15 complementary interviews with designers working for local authorities, we describe the values that emerged during the conception of territorial experience and aesthetics. Then, we analyze two subsets of values that appeared central to all 4 projects and interviews: the very act of living together (the ethological values) and how to define together the sharing of a living space (the political values). In our discussion, we show that the debates not only focused on how people want to shape their environment in relation to their values of well-being, safety, and feeling at home with nature but also how discussions

on values enabled actors to first challenge existing decision processes and second to test new ways of interacting and debating. The design workshops served as a test bed for a political arena that could be defined as a conceptive space and not only a space for controversy.

2. Methodological framework

Following [Kärholm \(2007\)](#) and the constructivist perspective of the actor-network theory (ANT), we will consider that the territory is a product of a territorial construction. “*A territory is, in short, a spatial actant, and it brings about a certain effect in a certain situation or place (the network). Territories need to be constantly produced and reproduced (by way of control, socialized behaviours, artifacts, etc.) to remain effective*” (S. D. [Brown and Capdevila, 1999](#)). The actant perspective is a fruitful one for our research on territorial design because it turns the question of what caused a certain territorial effect into an empirical one. The territorial power relations are then described as a network of different actants: artifacts, persons, rules of conduct, and laws ([Latour, 1991](#)), suggesting that territoriality is an altogether mobile and dynamic phenomenon (S. D. [Brown and Capdevila, 1999](#)).

Our research will use the conceptual foundations we have established to examine how these dynamic networks manifest themselves in current territorial design practices. This article is based on the one hand, on the analysis of four design projects that one of the authors was able to follow from start to finish from April 2020 to July 2021, and, on the other hand, on semi-structured interviews conducted in 2022 with 15 designers working for local authorities. The four design projects were part of the same program *Designing Outdoor Excellence for the Territories* to create concepts (products, installations, services, signage, etc.) to promote outdoor activities and sports.

We decided that the designer/researcher would not declare that her work would also be used as research material for several reasons. Through clandestine observation ([Abercrombie et al., 1984](#), p.305), the designer/researcher could be both an actor in the social game¹ and a distanced observer of the research field ([Bourdieu, 1978](#)). This posture seemed necessary to capture the values attributed to the design activity itself. The intense involvement in the participatory design workshops was balanced by times of reflection with the design team and the research team ([Bastien, 2007](#)).

Additional interviews with 15 designers, although deliberately not value-oriented, enabled us to verify our hypothesis by analyzing their project narratives. The designers interviewed were met at professional events or found through a search on Google and Lilo using the keywords “*design*” and “*territoire*”. We also completed our sample using the French association *Dessein Public* database, which enabled us to find designers in organizations and designers working in agencies.

They were interviewed for 45 minutes to one hour via videoconference between January and December 2022. Twelve of the fifteen designers have a degree in design, two are self-educated designers trained as consultants, and one is a design researcher. The interviews were based on a series of open-ended questions allowing designers to present their work. We asked them to describe their daily activity as well as give us particularly relevant examples. We wanted to answer the following empirical research questions: What do these *territorial designers* do, from the commission to the deliverables of their projects, including the long-term effects of their interventions on people and places? What topics do they work on? What difficulties do they face? Who are the actors they work with?

Then, we conducted a thematic analysis ([Charmaz, 2008](#)) and proceeded iteratively, collecting, coding, and analyzing data from the first interviews to identify categories and generate theoretical memos. This initial work enabled us to develop our questions. The codes revealed were numerous, but they made sense through the memos and were grouped until a limited number of categories were revealed ([Heath and Cowley, 2004](#)).

3. Field description and tools used in PD workshops

In December 2019, the Regional Committee for Tourism *Auvergne Rhône-Alpes* opened a public procurement on the theme: *Territories of outdoor excellence*. The goal was to design devices, products,

¹ Bourdieu describes the observed situation as a social situation. A set of actors is engaged in a game that must be objectified, while taking into account the subjective relationship to the object.

installations, services, signages, and systems, that improve outdoor activities and sports. A participatory design process was specifically requested.

Prior to the 2 consecutive days of workshops, visits to locations selected by the sponsors and qualified as "iconic of the region" were organized. The design team consisted of a creative designer and a specialist in outdoor tourism. Participants included project managers from the Region *Auvergne Rhône-Alpes* and project managers for each territory, as well as representatives of Tourism offices and local professionals (accommodation providers, restaurateurs, entertainers, guides, entrepreneurs, etc).

The design team had chosen two exercises as an introduction to the PD workshop. The first one was a mood board exercise, which can be seen as a starting point for problem-solving because of its potential to stimulate ideation. (Garner and McDonagh-Philip, 2001) The images were randomly placed on several tables so that each participant could choose two images (figure 1). The first was for his or her own presentation as a workshop participant. The second was to represent their vision of the *nature* of their territory. Images were presented and commented so that each participant could share their feelings and opinions on the existing situation.



Figure 1. Guidelines and images randomly placed on the table

Images referred to aesthetic properties of the territory, but they were also used for communication purposes between participants to frame the project. (Gentès et al., 2015) By speaking up and referring to their image, participants explained the reasons for their choices. The design brief and initial ideas were developed during this first exercise.

The second exercise involved personifying the *Territory of outdoor excellence*. The design team helped participants by explaining the beginning of the story: *The territory took on a human form...* and then guided them to describe out loud each stage of the story, symbolized by one poster. (Figure 2)

Personification is a narrative strategy, inspired by brand or product personification methods, (Delbaere et al., 2011) that supports an "empathy link" between participant and object. The object — here the territory — becomes an actor in the narrative (Picholle et al., 2009). While the participants found it hard to turn the "territory" into a person, they developed a narrative about the identity of the territory and were able to shape a future without being stuck in realistic representations. Thanks to this exercise, the design team extracted values for the projects.

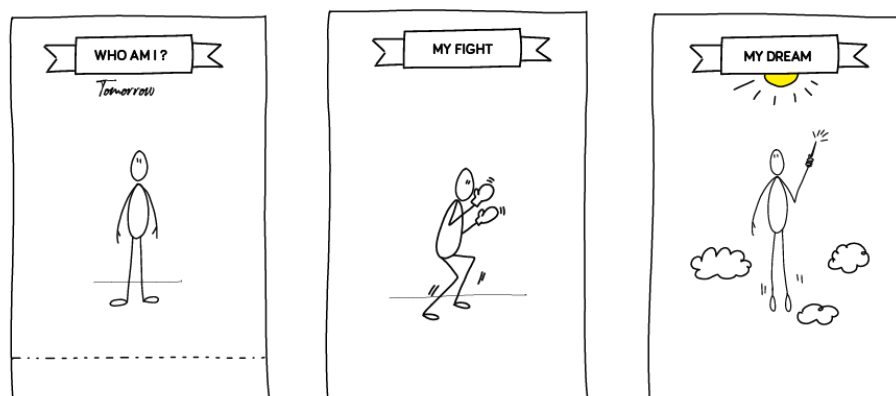


Figure 2. Personification posters. Source: Authors

The analysis of the interviews confirmed that since the term 'territory' has a variety of meanings, a large part of the designers' efforts consists of co-defining terms with their interlocutors to begin to "create a common language". This work, which is not only practical but also poetic in terms (Gentes and Selker, 2013), addresses issues of communication between stakeholders. It also makes it possible to designate an arena that is not limited in its applications. (Hémon et al., 2023)

In our cases, they all began to refer to their definition of the territory in the present. And so, the facilitator asked a question about the future. "Once the project is finished, what will our territory be like?" As participants became more involved in the exercise, the designer transformed the wireframe character with the given attributes to inspire participants to do it themselves. This generation of values was purely speculative. The aim was to describe how participants collectively imagined their territory. The use of visual thinking was important as it helped participants to make their thoughts tangible and visible to others. The designer's role in moderating and leading the project was important, as she helped and encouraged all participants to give their opinions. Using the visual artifacts, she opened an arena for debate centred on the values of the preferred situation (Mollon, 2019).

4. Typology of values shaping the vision of a territory

During the mood board exercise, participants focused on their vision of the current territory as they experience it in practice as tourism professionals, but also as residents and/or outdoor enthusiasts. (Figure 3) As they were explaining and discussing their choices, two main groups of values emerged. The first group of values is directly linked to the users' experience of the territory and the participants' design goal in terms of tangible and symbolic infrastructures. The second one focuses on the design process itself and what it initiates in terms of political relations.



Figure 3. Results of the first exercise: Mood board of case 1

4.1. Users' experience of the territory and participants' design goals: tangible and symbolic infrastructures

The objectives of all four projects were to create products, services, or facilities promoting and supporting tourism, outdoor activities, and sports. The region was described as full of treasures needing to be unveiled and discovered. However, tensions arose over the choices to be made: preservation of nature versus development, multi-activities versus mono-activities, and sports versus leisure. In other words, the concept of Nature acted as an ideological suitcase value that could accommodate very different perceptions. (Minsky,2007)

4.1.1. *User experience from the participants perspective: territories as a crossroad between nature and human activities*

1. Different activities with nature.

A close relation to nature was the common ideal for everyone. Discussions were about "not damaging nature" and "preserving nature". However, how to access, exploit, or even define nature was far from consensual. Participants agreed to develop outdoor sports, but without compromising the natural environment (as a stadium or golf course might do). Sports were either defined in terms of specialties, or more broadly speaking as fun activities. The aim was either to "promote multi-activity", to showcase "different sports" such as mountain biking, trail running, hiking, and swimming, or to combine them with other cultural activities. Participants expressed a "desire for culture, shows and entertainment", as well as to showcase their "gastronomy".

2. Diverse experiences of nature.

The participants agreed that the approach should be inclusive, "simple" and "accessible to all" but also had to be suitable for outdoor sports enthusiasts in their quest for performance: simplicity and accessibility on the one hand, expert sports performance on the other.

In addition to these contrasting values, participants also highlighted different states of mind. The projects had to support a sense of well-being and a spiritual state that nature, outdoor activities, and sports provide. They wanted users to be in a "state of relaxation", where they "feel good" and "zen". The experience would be like a "breath of fresh air" and would enable users to "recharge their batteries". Others saw the territory as "a playground" for the user, "fun", challenging, and "adventurous". Finally, some participants expressed the wish that the user should be "amazed" by nature.

4.1.2. *Design goals from the participants perspective: symbolic and tangible infrastructures*

The participants then discussed the usefulness of the projects and progressively drew up a set of specifications on both tangible and symbolic elements. (figure 4)

1. Tangible infrastructures

In terms of mobility and infrastructure development strategy, they expressed the need for tourists to be able to "circulate everywhere", with "accessibility by public transport" and "soft mobility". They called for "an infrastructure network" to enable the region to develop "more atypical (attractive) accommodation" and a clearer "organization" of its services.

The participants mentioned natural elements of the territory to be considered both as a context of practice and as visual inspiration, as creative medium for imagining new products or services. They all agreed that they were "inspired by the landscape". They described the relief as "mountainous", "high" or "wide", and the natural elements such as "forests" and "lakes". Others spoke of "countryside", crops, and "fields". They also pointed out the influence of elements like "water", but with different visual references. For example, "the river", for which some highlighted material details such as "pebbles", in reference to the mineral colors that have been used for many buildings in the area. Others advocated "greener", warmer natural materials such as "wood". Some even referred to more poetic dimensions, such as "clouds" or "water in all seasons", evoking a landscape changing with the seasons. The different landscapes produced

visual universes that were translated into a variety of aesthetic attributes, which were then used in the specifications and transformed into graphic codes. But the aesthetic codes were also associated with an ethical vision of "living with nature".

2. Symbolic alignments

In discussing the project's objectives, values converged towards a future eco-responsible territory. Participants said they wanted to put "ethics" and "sustainable development at the heart of the strategy". They spoke of "slow tourism" because they wanted to "avoid saturation of sites", by adopting an "eco-responsible" approach as a territory, but also as actors (socio-professionals) and as inhabitants. They insisted on the "quality" offered to visitors. Designing territories was a way of exploring and exposing their poetic, aesthetic, and ethical characteristics.

They also discussed the challenges of public communication, and the need to find "a strong identity" to "make ourselves known to people". Indeed, as territories are in competition with one another, they wanted to "show that they have everything". They wanted to attract tourists, but also to satisfy residents. Design projects had to make the outdoor offer clearer and more visible.

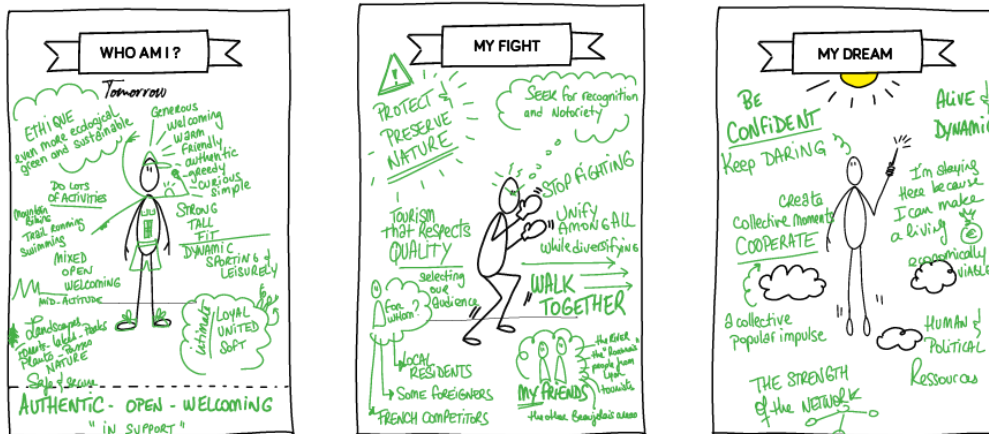


Figure 4. Results of the second exercise: Personification of territory case 1

4.2. The design process from the participants perspective: political processes at stake

The work on mood boards and the personification of the territory helped define "what is the territory for me?" from an individual perspective, but also as a group, "what is the territory for us?", which raised other questions.

4.2.1. Becoming a group: discussing and adjusting

In one case, we observed growing tensions between several socio-professionals who felt "forgotten" because they lived in more isolated, less touristy locations, and those who lived in the area's "emblematic places". Some professionals expressed "a feeling of abandonment", "a lack of support", and demanded that outdoor spaces should not be reduced to a single emblematic location. Then there was another tension between the participants and the "Tourist Office" which was viewed by the participants as the only one to decide. The design team realized that participants needed to express their disagreements and establish a dialogue before getting involved in the codesign project. The confrontation between sponsors and participants on the workshop's goal was essential. It showed that an adjustment between the actors was necessary.

In our series of interviews, this was confirmed by other designers. They often gave examples of frustrated participants who pointed out that previous projects submitted to the community had not been implemented. In one of the interviews, the designer explained that the participants who work for the

institution questioned the purpose of the project. They were surprised by the director's desire to create "new things". They wanted to "establish the protocol of what is already being done. Because it's a new management, so it's a new director, he's going to impose things and he's going to operate in a certain way. But the next one, when it's no longer him, well, we'll have to adapt again." They questioned the injunction to innovate.

In all our cases and interviews, power issues between participants had to be expressed and acknowledged to readjust the brief and perhaps reformulate the problems. In other words, participants had to express political values both extrinsic (the goal of the project) and intrinsic (how it is done) to the design work.

4.2.2. Co-designing relations and project management

The design projects triggered discussions on the need for collective work. Participants expressed their difficulty in working alone. They wanted to "create collective moments" and "encourage synergy between actors" but above all stated that they should "stop fighting" and "trust each other".

For some of the designers we interviewed, the fact that participants realize they are part of a group is a first success because it creates a sense of community. The designers observed that during PD workshops, participants "tried to find a global coherence in their commitment". This collective quest for coherence fostered the emergence of a collective experience for which, in turn, values had to be defined. The design workshops not only offered them a space for experimenting with collaboration but also enabled everyone to explore and redefine their place in a network of relationships. Similarly, during interviews, some designers highlighted the emergence of new forms of collaboration between actors who wished to take charge of certain initiatives: "Some (residents or actors) can be promoters and developers of certain parts of the project. They can be small contributors, so that a kind of co-responsible project emerges on the territory, and changes postures. The fact that it is a learning project for everyone involved helps to change cultures and attitudes". During the workshop, they even described qualities that suggest future cooperation. They envisioned a "federating" group emphasizing "complementarity" to "cooperate" and "create a network of project-driven actors".

The designers interviewed later confirmed that this cooperation could be made possible by a change in public and administrative management: "The administration is very sector-based and compartmentalized. The challenge for us is to break this down". This desire to change management is shared by most of the designers interviewed: "We need a collective mobilization of the territory(ies) and therefore an adaptation also within the public administration to initiate and create this movement and implement adapted public policies."

As the coordinators of two cases confirmed a month later, the participants no longer wanted to work in silos. The codesign workshop had enabled the actors not only to meet but also to create "win-win relationships". By projecting themselves onto the artifacts to be created, participants had built a learning community and initiated future cooperation during the workshop and beyond.

5. Territorial design: at the crossroad of ethology and politics

The territorial topic introduces ethological and political values that are to be considered with equal importance.

5.1. Designing the ethological dimension

Elaborating on participatory design research, our analysis confirms that values have a transcendental quality. In the projects, values offered a horizon of expectations that guided the design work. We realized that, in territorial design, values shape territories at both micro (personal, physical, and spiritual relationships with the environment) and macro (infrastructures) levels.

The analysis of our data shows that the conception of territories implies considering the ethological dimension of the concept both on micro and macro levels. Discussions showed the emergence of a physiological relationship with territories: people's bodies are challenged by nature or brought into a relationship with it. Designing territories means addressing our intimate relationship with nature. Human bodies must be in harmony with the natural environments of territories: discourses assert that this is both a physical and spiritual relation. Both the stroller and the athlete express a desire for

connection. Participants redefine sport not just as an object of competition or health, but as an opportunity for discovery and self-discovery, for wonder and aesthetic experience (Wendt, 1898) transcending differences: a universal heritage. (Rancière, 2013) The sense of beauty is not just a marketing argument, but an end in itself.

The discussion about tangible infrastructures also highlighted the need for a different scale of design, involving multiple actors in the territory rather than the production of a service by a single actor. At this macro level, territorial design aims to put in place infrastructures that merge both natural systems (topography and natural elements) and artificial devices and systems (Simon, 1996) that support access, mobility, and accommodation. Analysis of our fieldwork shows that stakeholders consider that human infrastructures are meant to reflect and extend the living qualities of the territory. The concept of infrastructure seems to support the convergence of the natural and the artificial so that they can coexist. But the analysis also shows that the territory is defined by several thematic values that are articulated around oppositions, particularly when the ethological stakes of the living intersect with economic, tourism, and political objectives.

5.2. Designing the political dimension

Also, as pointed out by Rokeach (1973) and Halloran et al. (2009), in participatory design, values guide attitudes. Participatory design workshops not only pursue extrinsic design objectives, but they also support reflexivity about the group and its activity and support team building in original ways. Working on values helps redefine participants' roles and responsibilities. In our research, participants felt that the workshop made them reflect on the values and dynamics of collaboration. While the sharing of values enables local communities to participate in the development of the territory (Parente and Sadini, 2017), our research also shows that a project-based organization confronts and attempts to overcome the traditional sectoral divisions related to territorial management. The workshops were experienced as a testing ground for new community relations and political activities.

5.2.1. Learning new ways of working

During the workshop, participants learned how to design a multi-stakeholder project and how to collaborate. It was not just the products, services, and infrastructures that were designed, but also the way the group designed together. Values relating to personal and collective commitment and reflections on working together emerged during the workshops for the present, but they were also expected for the future. By projecting themselves onto the artifacts to be created, this learning community initiated future cooperation during the workshop and beyond.

5.2.2. Testbed for policy making as design

Another set of values emerged, concerning equity of resources, but also decision-making power. By addressing disparities in legitimacy, power, and visibility, participants introduced a political debate. Conflicts quickly emerged, reflecting local socio-political situations and ambitions. By highlighting values for the project and for the participation process itself, participants revealed how people experienced equity, cooperation, and democracy on a territorial scale. Ultimately, territorial design highlights the power issues and social and economic concerns of groups. Territorial design is an arena for debate (Mollon, 2019), but it also opens a space for working collectively on how to change interactions. Since values need to be commonly defined and accepted, participants have the "power to act", they can take charge of their future by developing their own ideas. Participatory design helps to reduce the distance between those who have the power to act and those who do not (Pedersen, 2016).

Consequently, organizing and animating the design of a territory is a challenge as designers must channel conflicts, expose, and acknowledge differences. They try and offer neutral spaces where postures can change, and a shared conception can emerge. (Molnar and Palmas, 2021).

In this respect, we believe that the theme itself - the territory as a construct - and the values-based methodology provided the basis for the expression of power issues, as well as the time and means to work on them.

5.3. Terms and conditions for the development of design-oriented policies

Finally, our observations and interviews show that discussions also focus on design as a political activity. Actors reflected on possible evolutions in their decision-making process, not only within the framework of the workshop but also beyond. Participants were sensitive to the workshop experience for its own sake (Jolivet-Duval et al., 2022; Gwiazdzinski, 2015), as it enabled them to reflect on the modalities of their collective activity and decision-making also outside of the workshops. The important change is that this modality of work requires not only that interests should be negotiated, but also that they should be reformulated.

Territorial design can be seen as an alternative to faction-based politics, as it offers participants an experiment on how to transform their regular interactions. Rather unexpectedly and indirectly, the benefits of territorial design concern the aims and modalities of creative work on the territory. The debate on values is therefore essential, as it is in all design work that seeks to ensure that these values are embodied in the artifacts designed. But it also has a very special meaning insofar as it refers to the root of all axiological discourse (Habermas, 1985), which consists in agreeing on the terms of living together.

6. Conclusion

Our research confirms that the identification of ethological and political values is the starting point for territorial design.

These values bring humans and nature closer together, underlining their mutual dependence at micro and macro levels. This is certainly a challenge for territorial designers, as they must invent continuities between distant realms, considering the spiritual, physical, and rational elements of convergence.

Territorial design is also about the values that structure new interactions between participants experimenting with new ways of working together. The organization, facilitation, and mediation of design activities act as a learning space for participants, challenging the compartmentalized and bureaucratic methods of public management. Territorial design is experienced as a way of overcoming controversy and finding alternatives to the usual political game. On the one hand, it addresses the issue of living together, and on the other, it redefines political action as a conceptual activity that offers another way of deciding what to do and how to do it. Territorial design workshops appeared as a theater and metonymy of the territory's political situation but also offered a space for exploring new forms of participation in the territory. The results show that by sharing their vision of living together, participants build their common ground and become a community around the project.

Finally, these findings define the specific role of territorial designers in contributing politically to the definition of living together, across political and cultural scales and roles.

We believe that the general theme of the projects chosen by the sponsor, "Territories of outdoor excellence", must have oriented the values expressed by the participants. We are convinced that the specifications and responses show a certain orientation of the design work: territories are felt and experienced as living entities with human and non-human elements. However, we tried to go beyond this limit with the interviews.

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