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Objet : Abstract

When I was a young child, my relationship with politics was always linked to the presidential election. As I got on in age and progressed through the school years, I realised that the presidential election was a major topic of discussion at school, in the streets, on television and with my family. I discovered that the motto of the French Republic ("liberty, equality, fraternity") took on its full meaning during this election. The act of voting was familiar to me and it was through this action that the practice of democracy could be practised. This is why democracy, as an ideal to be defended in the name of the general interest, has always been linked to the French motto within the national education system, and even within my family education. The notion of democracy in our society seemed to me to be very positive, even normative. By simplifying the interpretation of democracy, either it's something that's going to happen and has to happen, or it's already in place but it's been criticised by advocating the idea that it's weakening or that it's not really a democracy at all. So, given my situation and my vision of democracy, I wanted to take an interest in the notion of "democracy" and study the link it might have with design.

Starting from the observation that citizens are turning more and more away from the ballot box (Tristan HAUTE and Vincent TIBERJ, 2022) and that social movements generally highlight the failure of government policies to take account of their day-to-day concerns (Jean-Claude KAUFMANN, 2019), I began to want to

understand the atmosphere of this political crisis. In the field of political design research, I first discovered the "Design des instances" research programme because of its ability to develop new democratic tools. According to "Design des instances", design can be used to extract, deploy and appropriate a model to turn it into a representation of democratic life. In this way, the deficit in citizen representation — caused by the professionalisation of political life — can be broken by making visible the reality of citizens' actions and issues. If we start from the principle that democracy is an experimental process (John DEWEY, 1929) in which citizens — judged on the basis of their respective skills — engage in a collective enquire to solve the country's problems at the present time, then design has a key role to play in facilitating understanding of democratic life. This position encourages the designer to act as a mediator within the enquiries, putting forward the citizens' voices on an equal footing. The challenge is to describe the enquiry landscape in a way that makes its complexity easy to understand.

However, representing the complexity of enquiries depends to a large extent on the parameters we can assimilate to them. Within a society, we realise that human beings are influenced by the artefacts that surround them. This means that human and non-human actors are interconnected and influence each other to shape social interactions and cultural meanings (Bruno LATOUR, 2022). This interconnection forms a network, and it is this network that enables the designer to mediate between human and non-human actors. The identification of problems then becomes complex because of the intensity of the actors who are applied to a given subject. Consequently, one of the best ways of representing this complexity is to use cartographic design. Cartography offers three main advantages. Firstly, cartography has the ability to convey information by locating it in space and time. Secondly,

cartography is a common tool that anyone can use. Thirdly, cartography can simultaneously touch on the fields of politics, art and science, offering a naturally experimental approach. So I asked myself : to what extent can cartographic design be used as a means of communication ?

In order to answer this question, I first needed a field of study on which I could work. By enrolling at the heart of the city of Charleville-Mézières during my fifth year of study, I was free to examine the subject of 'cycling in the city'. At a time when France is in the process of making a timid ecological transition, the subject of mobility in the city is playing an increasingly important role in public debates. Although at first glance it may seem that cycling is the logical and predominant way to get around urban areas, the fact remains that the place of cycling in urban planning remains confused and controversial. My design research, and therefore my enquiry, consists in creating a space for discussion through cartography where the different points of view on the subject of cycling in Charleville-Mézières can be brought together, in order to equip the public and better guide them in constructing their own opinion on the issue.

In order to achieve this objective, I was inspired by the "controversy mapping" research methodology created by Bruno LATOUR, Michel CALLON, John LAW and others. This method was mainly carried out in three steps. Firstly, I had to list the various actors who were directly or indirectly linked to the subject of cycling in Charleville-Mézières. These could include public actors (such as Parliament, the mayor, Ardenne métropole, etc.), associations (such as Ma ville à vélo 08, Le cabaret vert, etc.), non-human actors (such as cycling, car parks, roads, etc.), citizens or the media sphere (such as France télévision, Le Parisien, social

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networks, etc.). In order to identify the actors more precisely, this initial analysis had to be carried out empirically. This is why I had the opportunity to go to Charleville-Mézières town centre in order to observe my field of study, and to go and meet the "Ma ville à vélo 08" association in order to observe and talk to the people at the forefront of the issue of cycling in town. Secondly, I had to identify the problems inherent in cycling in the city. Whether technical (such as mechanics), legislative (such as the Highway Code), economic (such as the budget) or environmental (such as life-cycle analysis), each of these issues is essential to assimilate in order to clearly understand the situations of conflict between the public and the private sector.

Right now, I haven't finished this third step in my research, but I would like to go further in formatting the data gathered in steps one and two of my research. From there, I turned my attention to the digital form of democracy and found that it offered some advantages to my design research. Indeed, the experimental nature of democracy (as described by John DEWEY and pushed by Bruno LATOUR) and which I am practising with my enquiry into the subject of cycling in Charleville-Mézières, can be associated with digital culture and more particularly with the 'digital commons'. Generally linked to the Internet, the digital commons is characterised by collaboration, transparency and participation (Clément MABI, 2020). These characteristics mean that digital platforms are developed using open source software that promotes digital inclusion by creating collaborative databases and sharing content, thereby contributing to the decentralisation of control and the emergence of participatory governance. Examples such as OpenStreetMap in the field of cartography show how this platform provides free access to a wealth of information, facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and the creation of shared

knowledge. This is why the working method of my design research will revolve around digital cartography and particularly its open source appeal. The fact that I'm taking the digital commons approach reflects my desire to consider each citizen in terms of their experience and skills, in order to encourage a multitude of contributors to share their experiences of cycling in the city.

To conclude, I explore the role of design as a mediator for empowering democracy, in particular through the methodology of "controversy mapping". By focusing on the experimental nature of democracy and turning to the digital form of the "digital commons", I envisage an open source approach to my research on the subject of cycling in Charleville-Mézières. By favouring citizen participation and knowledge sharing, this methodology aims to provide an inclusive account of the various perspectives of controversy surrounding cycling issues in Charleville-Mézières. This approach highlights the potential of design to give citizens a voice, promote understanding of democratic life and help resolve social problems. This innovative approach opens the way to a wider reflection on the role of design in revitalising democracy, and invites further exploration of the synergies between democratic practice and collaborative digital tools.