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► **To cite this version:**

Jean-Marc Weller, Frédérique Pallez, Emmanuel Coblence. Design Approaches in the Public Sector: Problematizations, Actors and Transformations in the French Administration. 3rd International Conference on Public Policy Design Approaches in the Public Sector, Jun 2017, Singapore, Singapore. hal-01787038

**HAL Id: hal-01787038**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01787038v1>**

Submitted on 7 May 2018

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3rd International Conference on Public Policy  
Singapore, 28-30th June 2017

**Design Approaches in the Public Sector: Problematizations, Actors  
and Transformations in the French Administration**

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**Abstract** : Over the past decade, French public services have introduced innovative approaches of a new kind, formally breaking with the bureaucratic engineering of the administration. These initiatives seem to be heterogeneous and diverse, but they adopt approaches sharing a similar family resemblance, inspired in a large extent by the principles of design — or “user-oriented design” — in the making of public policy. In schools, hospitals, social services or public authorities, local experimentations and research-action programs have been developed: residencies with multidisciplinary teams of professionals and stakeholders in total immersion with a public facility, prototyping tests for new innovation methods on a specific topic, ground-level actions, do-it-yourself projects, etc.

As part of a research project entirely focused to these new Forms of Public Innovation by design (FPI), the authors of this paper suggest to outline the main features of this unprecedented landscape in the French public sector. From a 200 cases database designed as a part of this research, the challenge is to provide a description of the phenomenon of emergence of these innovations carried out over the last ten years through two kinds of questions.

The first one is about temporal dynamics of such a movement and their potential meanings. Is it a sectorial trend, based on a few areas of government, particularly receptive to design methods? Or is it a global and wide wave, impacting public policies in general? The concepts of design applied to public services seem to meet an undeniable success in France. But is this rise of design approaches a fundamental tendency, revealing lasting changes in the forms of innovation in administrations, or is it just a cyclical manifestation of what evil spirits would call a “fashion effect”, as plenty of management tools and managerial approaches through their life cycles, their onset, development, and irresistible decline (Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999)? The data from the survey show, in this respect, a crucial paradox : an already possible decrease of local experiments, but in the same time an increasingly strong attractiveness of the theme.

The second type of question is all about the possible meaning of such a phenomena. Design methods and their applicability to public sector can inspire different strategies (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016) and reveal what Actor Network Theory would consider as a complex and various “work of problematization” from their promoters (Callon, 1986). Actually, the FPI population from the database describe four ways of building innovation: citizen participation, data visualization, improving accessibility for public services users and reengineering decision-making process. However, these different issues seem to change over time. While the first two themes dominated the early stages, the two last ones seem to prevail today. Is this a displacement of the objects of intervention of designers, moving from a service design to that of a process design? How to interpret such an evolution?

## **Introduction**

Over the past decade, public services have been introducing hitherto unseen innovative approaches, formally breaking with the managerial reforms that had been previously deployed: multi-week “immersion” within a territory; collective projects bringing together public servants, users, creative professions, and social science researchers; the “rapid prototyping” of new services; exhibitions mobilizing artistic processes; and the mass use of atypical media formats (blog, video, slideshow, etc.). While the actual forms that these initiatives take on appear varied, they nonetheless pertain to techniques appearing to belong to the same family and which voluntarily place themselves under the banner of “service design”. But according to what mechanisms? Based on what issues? With what aims and what content?

As a part of a research project<sup>1</sup> entirely dedicated to new Forms of Public Innovation (FPI) “by design”<sup>2</sup>, this article presents an overview of this unprecedented landscape. By surveying more than 200 cases in France over the past ten years (2006-2015), within widely diverse public institutions, our intent is to provide a description of the phenomenon of emergence of these innovations “by design”. To do so, and in reference to the actor-network theory, whose concepts can be used here as a guideline :

- i. we first outline the general features of the changes involved, in relation to the following questions: What is the temporal dynamic of this trend? What actors mobilize these approaches? Are there sectors of administration that are more particularly receptive to them? On what fields of knowledge, apart from design science, are they based ?
- ii. we then discuss the formulation of issues and the problem framing that, from the point of view of their designers, these innovations follow. Four main types are thus identified.

## **1. General characteristics and inventory**

The approaches on which this article focuses concern diverse subjects and issues, all of which present the particularity of aligning themselves with “design”. As social science researchers, this intrigued us. It forced us to take a new look at each of our representations of designers’ projects, thus raising the question of how the reference to design, which is widely acknowledged in the context of telephones, chairs, or tables, can play a role in public action? It is therefore this enigmatic set of interventions and actions that we thought important to explore, for the purpose of proposing a map of them. Without considering their effects, we have called these approaches “forms of public innovation” (FPI). By “forms”, we intend to encompass undertakings that are necessarily heterogeneous in form, but whose creation is based on a repertoire of practical knowledge and know-how that is explicitly

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<sup>1</sup> This Research Project FIP-EXPLO (ANR-13-SOIN-0003) was funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR).

<sup>2</sup> We simply refer to this as FPI in the remainder of the text, to remain consistent with the acronym chosen at the beginning of the research.

formulated in reference to design, albeit independently of what they are seen to mean and, therefore, without making any assumptions regarding the properties or content that supposedly characterize them. By “innovation”, we mean that we are interested in projects that intend to transform a state of matters, in particular around situations that are reputed to be tricky (“wicked problems”), in such a way that they shift the focus, and in so doing highlight unnoticed aspects that are nonetheless considered to be essential *a posteriori*. By “public”, we are referring to the fact that these experiments directly involve public institutions (territorial entities, schools, decentralized government services, the central government, hospitals, etc.).

We therefore endeavoured to assemble a sufficiently large population of FPI (n=204). Some were intended to bring about concrete transformations, while others were for exploratory purposes, without necessarily being subject to practical implementation. We found all of these initiatives interesting to include, due to the nature of the approaches that they proposed. To successfully complete this census, which was necessarily partial, we diversified our sources (text box below). The resulting database was organized into series of variables regarding, respectively, the identity of each FPI, its nature, its actors, and the knowledge concerned<sup>3</sup>. It is therefore on the basis of these elements that we will describe the evolution of the phenomenon examined here (1.1.), the actors involved (1.2.), the governmental sectors concerned (1.3.), and the practical knowledge mobilized as it appears via the classification of the professionals involved in the implementation of the project (1.4.).

### **Sources of the database**

The results presented in this article are based on the querying of 114 French-language websites potentially involved in the introduction of design approaches into public services. These include: the websites belonging to private agencies, which are often very small, and which are mainly or exclusively oriented towards design approaches, although based on spheres of intervention that are potentially varied (n=58); the websites of consulting firms, which generally employ a large number of

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<sup>3</sup> More specifically, to investigate these four main categories of variables, we attempted to identify different items: regarding the identity of the FPI, we were able to provide the title, the scope of action, the place, and the date of the project. Regarding its nature, we included the public sector concerned, the type of action carried out, and the intended goal of the approach. Regarding the public actors involved, we included the institutions or actors concerned, and noted the possible presence of an intermediary structure, as well as the people involved among external stakeholders. Regarding knowledge, we established the list of disciplines displayed for each project when we were able to do so, based on the information available to us.

staff, that use or develop innovative approaches “by design” among their methods without, however, being recognized as doing so (n=8); the websites of public services making use of the services of designers, and which establish the state of their undertakings on various levels (n=12); the websites of schools or universities offering design training (n=8); blogs by designers giving an account of their own undertakings (n=18); platforms dedicated to the online distribution of news and work carried out, in particular by designers or intermediary structures (n=5); and specialized online magazines likely to also survey these initiatives (n=5).

We identified these websites by means of two processes. The first was the result of the inventorying of design structures, carried out by multiple actors in the sector and which served as the basis for the initial identification of FPI<sup>4</sup>. The second was based on the surveying of websites potentially involved in the field of the study, carried out systematically with the help of the search engine [google.fr](http://google.fr). Combined, these two approaches allowed us to inventory a significant number of relevant sites, and even to cover a broad range of projects and issues. We were able to verify the data resulting from these projects, via cross-referencing to identify redundant information on the same undertakings reported by multiple websites.

Yet, given the difficulty of establishing an inventory of a fledgling field, this study can but be limited. In reality, the Internet offers only a limited and often biased view of the variety and content of design experiments in the public sphere: projects blown out of proportion for commercial and visibility purposes; websites that are not necessarily exhaustive; blogs that are rarely or poorly updated; and so on. As for other subjects of study, the challenge is nonetheless to limit arbitrariness and the necessarily partial nature of analyses by collecting a sufficiently large number of cases.

### 1.1. Following a marked expansion, an uncertain evolution

Our examination of FPI over time revealed three main periods: that of the pioneers, which can be considered to correspond to the years up until 2008; that of expansion, which would follow it up until 2013; and that of a slowdown or even decline, which would encompass the following two years. Clearly, this chronological evolution (Figure 1) must be considered with caution, taking into account the methodological limitations mentioned above. It does nonetheless appear plausible, and is confirmed by a certain number of complementary elements. For example, the first period covers projects (n=7) which, regarding artistic approaches associated with the development

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<sup>4</sup> This survey was made possible through the exchange of information and discussions that we had under the FIP-EXPLO research programme, in particular with Stéphane Vincent (27<sup>e</sup> Région), Olivier Hirt (ENSCI), and Jacques-François Marchandise (FING), taking into account their first-hand knowledge of this sector. Moreover, we were able to benefit from the production of publications and public reports, and specifically Manzini and Staszowski (2013), Cadix (2013), and Scherer (2015). Last of all, the inventory of FPI was completed through the consultation of a library of cases established at the 27<sup>e</sup> Région, but which remains confidential.

of public spaces or participatory approaches inviting the inhabitants of a neighbourhood to rethink certain facilities, brought together designers to work with town planners, plastic artists, architects, or social sciences researchers for the first time. The major feat lies not only in these unprecedented combinations; it is also contained in the novel production of a discourse of legitimization by design, the methodologies of which appeared inspiring. The second period corresponded to strong growth of the phenomenon, when the number of FPI observed constantly increased over five years (n=139). This expansion, based on the entry in force of designers into projects, very generally corresponds to the structuring of a professional milieu that is clearly visible elsewhere as well: the entry onto the scene of a number of actors playing a strategic role in the steering of projects, such as La 27<sup>e</sup> Région in 2008 or La Cité du Design in 2010; the establishment of international networks of similar experiences such as the DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) network created 2009; and the more active role played by design schools and universities (Le Boeuf, 2015). As for the third period, it reveals a slowdown in the phenomenon, taking into account the number of FPI surveyed (n=58). This decrease that we observed, but that still needs to be confirmed, especially because it covers only two years, also seems to be contemplated on a more general level by the actors in the sector themselves. They mention a possible “risk of running out of steam”, and intend to renew their deployment strategies<sup>5</sup>. The subject is nevertheless of growing interest among academic communities.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the case of the “extended school” animated by the NESTA, and bringing together a panel of public innovation practitioners and experts from across the world: <http://www.la27eregion.fr/ischool-une-ecole-pour-remettre-de-la-reflexivite-dans-linnovation-publique/>

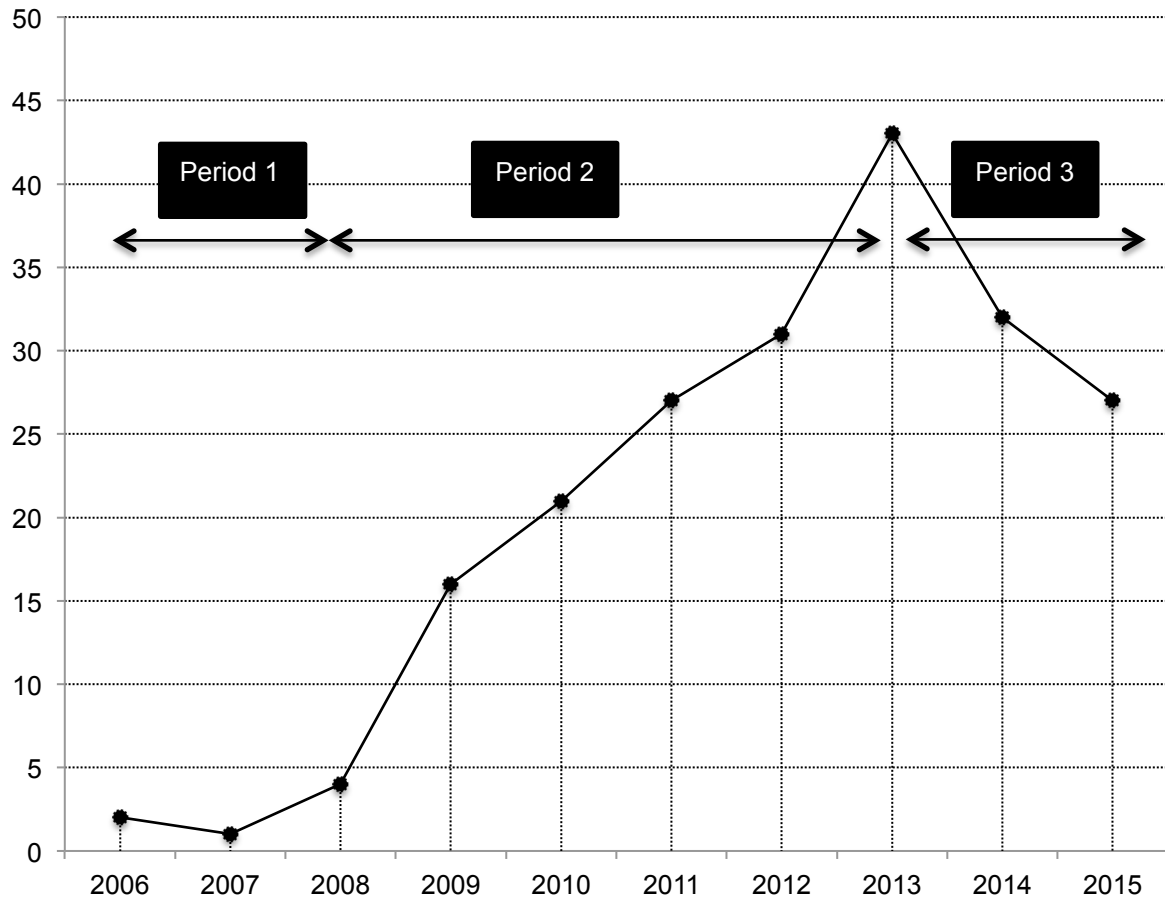


Figure 1 : Chronological evolution of FPI (2006-2015).

Data source : FIP-Explo database

Of particular interest in this evolution, in addition to the rise of public innovative approaches by design, is this division into three distinct phases. It specifically raises questions regarding the reconfiguration of the sector, involving public actors and designers through mechanisms that are potentially different for each of the periods mentioned. It also highlights the still fragile dimension of the phenomenon that we are seeking to describe.

## 1.2. FPI and their Actors

Like any innovation, each FPI is impossible to dissociate from the network of actors that it was necessary to mobilize and to involve step-by-step. Among these actors, we can highlight in particular the public institutions concerned and the professionals directly involved in the implementation of the project. Regarding the former, our first finding concerns the dominant place of territorial entities (and similar) in the



management of these projects. In fact, they are involved in almost two-thirds of the projects inventoried (Table 1).

	Number	Total	%
<b>A.- Central government and similar</b>		<b>25</b>	
Ministries	21		10 %
National authorities and agencies	04		
<b>B.- Territorial entities and similar</b>		<b>149</b>	
Regional councils	56		59 %
Departmental councils	38		
Communes, cities, inter-municipal associations	53		
Public development establishments	02		
<b>C.- Public hospital services</b>		<b>20</b>	
Hospitals	13		8%
Retirement homes	07		
<b>D.- Public research and training services</b>		<b>31</b>	
Schools	21		12 %
Universities	08		
CEA [atomic and alternative energy commission]	02		
<b>E.- Social, cultural and security public services</b>		<b>18</b>	
Social Security funds	02		7 %
Pôle Emploi [French employment agency]	01		
DRAC [Regional cultural affairs department]	04		
Emergency housing centres	02		
Social centres	01		
Museums	04		
OPAC [Public development and construction bureaus]	01		
Regional nature parks	02		
Paris fire brigade	01		
<b>F.- Public companies</b>			
SNCF [French national railway company]	02		4 %
EDF [French national electricity company]	03		
La Poste [French national postal service]	04		
<i>Total</i>	252 (*)	252 (*)	100 %

Table 1: FPI and their public actors

(\*) The total exceeds the 204 FPI because each one may apply to multiple public actors.

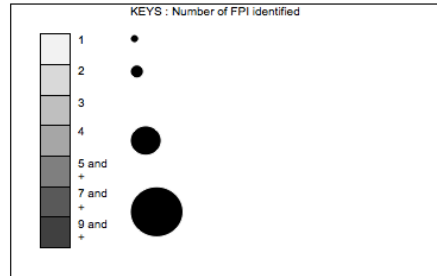
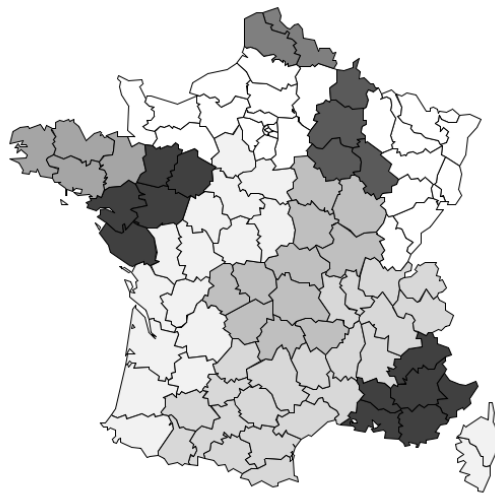
Multiple explanations can be advanced. An initial explanation relates to the position of territorial entities within the landscape of public institutions in France. Their rise to power has to be linked to successive waves of decentralization, with the transfers of competence that have accompanied them and have given them a central place in the management of public facilities and services affecting the daily life of citizens – as is the case of social and health actions for departmental councils, or high schools for regional councils. To this can be added, over the past 20 years, the multiplication of inter-*commune* structures granting new capabilities for action at an infra-departmental level. Lastly, more general trends at play in the context of globalization are causing the recomposition of territories. Here, regions and cities are asserting

themselves as key political and economic actors capable of driving or sustaining the most innovative initiatives, and are fit to play a leading role in planning, development, and regulation, to the detriment of sovereign states.

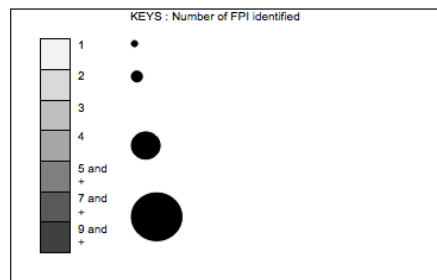
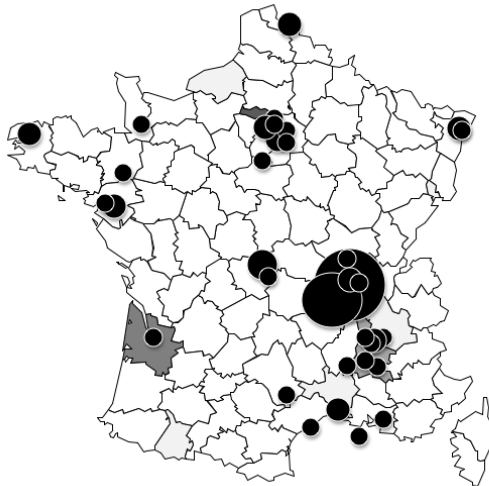
The second explanation is related to the stance of designers, who defend a contingent and contextualized vision of their action based on a specific “fieldwork” with users that has to be directly accessed and mobilized.

Due to the combination of these preoccupations — greater capabilities for action of local governments, desire of some of them to position themselves as actors in change and design approaches based on “situated” interventions —, it is not surprising to note a large portion of territorial institutions and inter-municipal entities among the FPI identified in our corpus. We also note that with its 22 identified FPI, a large city such as Greater Lyon occupies a remarkable place in the rise of innovations making use of service design.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the very unequal distribution of FPI across the administrative territories of the country. This is true not only of regions, but also and more generally of local governments (Figure 2).



2a : regions and FPI experiments



2b : cities and departements and FPI experiments

Figure 2: Distribution of FPI within local governments, source: FIP-Explo Database

Among the many hypotheses that we can put forward to explain this disparity, but which this paper is not focused on systematically testing<sup>6</sup>, two seem to be plausible according to qualitative inquiries carried out elsewhere. First, “prescriptive” actors, which in a recent publication (Coblence, Lefebvre and Pallez, 2017) we called “intermediary agencies” because they are not always the direct operators of FPI, play a significant role in the promotion of these new approaches. They orchestrate relationships by animating a community composed of public actors and numerous small design firms. The map that emerges partially reflects the territorial distribution

<sup>6</sup> We could, for example, imagine that the local governments involved share a similar sociological profile over a certain number of variables, or that the instances display identical political affiliation.

of their network. In particular, these consist of La 27<sup>e</sup> Région, the Fondation Internet Nouvelle Génération (FING) or, more locally, the Cité du Design in Saint-Etienne.

A second hypothesis, which is not mutually exclusive with the first, relates to the progressive establishment of regional ecologies around one or more actors involved in these approaches. These “network heads” may be research and foresight teams, as in Greater Lyon, or “laboratories” integrated into public establishments or local governments which, like the Fabrique de l’Hôpitalité at the Strasbourg Hospital, or the Mission Innovation at the Departmental Council of Val d’Oise, act as intermediaries in the application of design methods. Other more recent in-house public laboratories in certain local government administrations such as the regional council of the Pays de Loire or Provence Alpes Côte d’Azur, could eventually play the same role. We can also mention here the role of schools dedicated to the training of designers, albeit according to somewhat different mechanisms, in Nantes, Strasbourg, and Paris, and universities oriented towards design, such as in Nîmes, which locally build projects with public institutions and contribute to the development of these regional ecologies.

### 1.3. More or less receptive administrative sectors ?

The projects supported by the different FPI listed in the database apply to different sectors of activity of the public services that we have attempted to classify into broad categories. The question that led to this categorization into sectors was the following: do FPI approaches apply to all types of public services indifferently or do they have preferential sectors? In other words, can everything be “designed”? In fact, we can posit that FPI approaches, through their claim of tropism towards “users”, have to be particularly adapted to public services in which the users are numerous, clearly identified, present within a restricted scope, and well-defined. From this point of view, certain sectors (health care, education) appear to correspond to these features. But what is the reality of the matter? The classification of FPI by main sector of application yields the following results (Table 2).

<b>Sector of activity involved</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Urban planning	35	17%
Administration	31	15%
Health care	22	11%
Territorial (regional/local) development	21	10%
Social	19	9%
Environment	18	9%
Culture	15	7%
Education	13	6%
Transport	7	3%
Energy	5	2%
Society	5	2%
Employment	5	2%
Security	2	1%
Tourism	2	1%
Postal services	2	1%
Justice	1	-
Agro-food	1	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>204</i>	

Table 2: Public sectors of activity involved in FPI, source: FIP-Explo Database

Clearly, we must not grant too much importance to the details of the numbers indicated, which are largely dependent on the chosen nomenclature and the definition of the categories. For example, “urban planning” FPI appear to be the large majority, but this category encompasses all FPI involving the transformation and development of the public space, which can explain such a result. In reality, this intentionally very broad definition encompasses relatively varied actions: the development of train stations, green spaces, urban spaces in relation to disabilities, and so on.

Having taken these precautions, we can make some observations. The first is that the different sectors of activity of public services are quite unevenly represented. The FPI surveyed mainly concern urban planning, health care, territorial (regional/local) development, social affairs, the environment, culture, and education, but rarely involve sovereign public services such as justice, the police, and defence. Must this be seen as evidence of an attitude of distrust among those in positions of authority and the professionals concerned, or of their yet limited knowledge of these approaches? Reciprocally, do designers, through their personal political positions, have a more marked interest in certain sectors that are more directly related to the issue of living together and the consideration of fragile publics? Can we also consider, in accordance with the hypothesis expressed above, that there is a greater

degree of compatibility between FPI approaches and the types of public services that are initially oriented towards relations with users? Lastly, can we relate these observations to the fact that urban planning, education, and health care in particular are public sectors which make use of a set of research actions, interventions, or projects based on new methodologies, and have at times done so for many years?<sup>7</sup> At this stage in our reflection, it is clear that these elements only allow us to make assumptions and to point to issues that should be empirically explored. It is nevertheless currently likely that all of these explanations are at least partially true.

More intriguing is the importance of the FPI at work in the “administration” sector, which is the second most represented category. Note that this term encompasses all FPI focused on the transformation of workspaces, tools, specific administrative processes (as purchasing procedures, for example), or administrative “culture” in its entirety (the development of innovation “labs”, for example). These “administrative” FPI have in common the fact that they are largely polarized around the internal operation or rules of a public organization, rather than around the relation of publics. How can we explain this finding, which appears counterintuitive when compared to the discourse of many of the advocates of these FPI or the people involved in them, who emphasize a “user” approach? Faced with this, we realize that, in the discourses of these actors, the concept of “users” does not exclusively designate the “publics” which are the recipients of public services, but also often includes the agents directly involved in delivering them (what we generally call the “front-office”), or even some of their supervisors. But, more generally, it appears that an idea is developing among some designers, according to which the quality of the relationship to the public requires a sustainable change of the administration responsible for it. For example, this is what we read in a description of the evolution of the MindLab strategy: “...sustainable innovation will not happen via isolated projects...The next step is to help ensure that the civil servants are practising the new ways of innovating as an integrated, natural thing...” (Carstensen & Bason, 2012). Will service innovation necessarily go through a process innovation?

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<sup>7</sup> For example, artistic approaches at schools, hospitals, or local development, are part of a long history

#### 1.4. Knowledge applied in FPI

As noted above, we are interested in innovative approaches that make use of design. However, many of the approaches studied also draw on other disciplines. The idea expressed by many of the promoters of these approaches is in fact that a multidisciplinary perspective must replace the excessively uniform point of view generally shared about the way to conceive or transform public services. Another more methodological argument advanced by some is that design approaches are effectively completed by social science, which can contribute its ethnographic inquiry techniques in particular.

We therefore wanted to investigate the question of the disciplines working alongside designers on the FPI identified in the database. Clearly, a great deal of caution is necessary, as indications of discipline are used as they appear in the information sources consulted, without reprocessing on our part.

One initial finding, as Table 3 below indicates, is that only around half of the approaches inventoried (96 out of 194 approaches surveyed) actually call upon other disciplines as a complement to design. This challenges the claim of multidisciplinary mentioned above. That being said, by looking at the nature of the FPI pertaining to the work of the designer alone, we can posit that these are often one-time interventions (most likely with limited financing), such as the facilitation of meetings or seminars, at which the designer essentially has the function of facilitating and producing media intended for collective creativity.

<b>Disciplines involved</b>	<b>Number</b>
Design alone	98
Other disciplines associated with design	96
Not provided/unclear	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>204</b>

Table 3: Frequency of multidisciplinary in FPI, source: FIP-Explo Database

Out of the 96 observed cases of multi-disciplinarity, we have attempted to provide an initial view of the types of association between the discipline and design, by grouping into disciplines (which are necessarily debatable) (Table 4)

<b>Disciplines associated with design</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Social sciences and humanities</b>		<b>75</b>
Sociology	35	
Ethnology-anthropology	11	
Management, economics, political science and similar	20	
Other social sciences and humanities (psychology, philosophy, etc.)	09	
<b>Science and techniques of architecture, urban planning, and engineering</b>		<b>44</b>
Architecture and similar	17	
Urban planning and territorial development	04	
Engineering sciences	23	
<b>Arts and artistic techniques</b>		<b>26</b>
Visual, plastic, photo, and video arts	21	
Dramatic arts: dance, theatre, stage design	05	
<b>Sciences and techniques of education, mediation, and communication</b>		<b>07</b>
TOTAL		<b>152</b>

Table 4: Association of other disciplines with design, source: FIP-Explo Database

First of all, we note the large degree of representation of sociology in association with design. If we add anthropology and ethnology to it, we see that these types of association are found in almost half of all cases (46 out of 96). This seems consistent with the methodological argument mentioned at the beginning of this section, namely that the association between these three disciplines and design may relate to the need for general competencies regarding “human societies” which are indispensable to the designer working in organizations and various local authorities.

On one hand, the frequency (44 occurrences) of the association between design and the science and techniques of architecture, town planning, and engineering may be more related to the nature of the issues covered by FPI, in which spatial, building, and computing issues have been clearly identified from the beginning. It is hardly surprising, for example, that FPI employed for train station projects (FPI041) or high schools (FPI031) employ architects, that a project for the data visualization of medical information (FPI136) includes computer specialist, and that the design of new uses for an urban park (FPI204) requires the presence of a town planner. One hypothesis is therefore that, to be legitimate, the teams working with the designer must demonstrate technical abilities adapted to the nature of the problem addressed.



On the other hand, the non-negligible occurrence (20 cases) of specialties with less clear boundaries, such as management, political science, marketing, and foresight studies may lead to multiple interpretations. These rather general designations probably mask, among the individuals in question, competencies regarding the administrative procedures and organizations concerned by the FPI. Most likely, in these partners, designers are looking for “administrative technical expertise” analogous with the technical expertise previously mentioned. We furthermore have evidence of FPI in which business consultants collaborate with designers to combine complementary approaches and to ensure, as a “vehicle of change”, the organizational transformation processes for which designers are often loath to take responsibility.

We also wish to point out the significant presence of disciplines skilled in visual representation techniques (18 cases out of 96). This is consistent with discourses on the importance of the material or visual presentation displayed by the promoters of FPI. There might however possibly be redundancy between their competencies and those of designers.

## **2. Problem framing, publics and territories: four types of FPI**

If, as STS have shown for a long time, the success of an innovation is related less to its intrinsic properties than to the robustness of its networks, and if the soundness of the ties that characterize it involves problem framing to convince certain actors that they are affected by the “problem” to resolve and that they can find a solution to it by contributing to the implementation of the innovation in question (Callon, 1986; Akrich et al., 1988), then FPI can be appropriately described from the point of view of the way in which their promoters “interest” the multiple actors that they wish to mobilize. Apart from their specific methodologies – that would need to be described in situ, based on concrete cases, which is not the purpose of this article<sup>8</sup> –, two elements deserve to be highlighted within the database that we have compiled: the importance of the territory in the way in which the innovations in question are generally

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<sup>8</sup> For a specific example, see Abrassart, Gauthier, Proulx and Martel (2015).

understood (2.1.), and the diversity of problem framing that is tied to them, in particular from the point of view of the general aims of the approach and the way of defining its publics (2.2.).

## 2.1. FPI and their territories

One of the characteristics of the FPI identified is that they often turn the territory into an essential element. Whether this consists in redeveloping a subsidized housing neighbourhood to foster relations between generations and between communities (FPI160), giving an account of local uses of digital tools (FPI179), designing welcoming waiting rooms for families at a hospital (FPI085), or reflecting on the redefinition of an administrative procedure internal to a public service (FPI127), the question of places often constitutes an obligatory point of passage (Table 5). In reality, the scope contemplated by the different FPI can prove to vary greatly in terms of size: a whole valley for the FPI that consisted of coming up with an unprecedented instrument allowing for better coordination of health care professionals attending to elderly people at their homes in Haute Provence (FPI109); an entire river basin for the FPI that contributed to rethinking the interfaces responsible for preventing flood risks in the large urban centres crossed by the Loire River (FPI110); a *département* for the FPI that consisted of a foresight trip to the heart of the Gironde in a specially-outfitted bus to investigate the inhabitants from place to place (FPI050); and a hospital ward for the one that led to a new lighting device in the rooms of a specialized retirement home (FPI072).

	Number of FPI
FPI that make the territory an essential element of the problem framing	170
FPI with a general or national scope, without making the territory an essential element	34
Total	204

Table 5: FPI and the status of the territory

This attention to the territorial aspect constitutes a key element in the problem framing carried out by the promoters of FPI. It contributes to providing their approach with a character that is most often anchored, embodied, and always situated. Although it is philosophically readily aligned with pragmatism (Findeli, 2015), this orientation still raises questions when it contradicts the local nature within which it may be tempting to enclose it. Note that, even though they are locally situated, many FPI actually claim to address issues with a general scope. For example, this is the case of the experiments carried out for possible replication purposes, such as the “residency” which took place in Cluny intended to identify concrete improvements relevant to all the Relais de Services Publics [Public Service Relays] in rural areas (FPI039) (Coblence and Pallez, 2015). It is furthermore also the case of approaches – and these are frequent – that combine the practical and situated tests and prototyping with a foresight perspective aiming to build potential scenarios involving the institution in its entirety. For example, this is the case of the initiative exploring the forms of valorizing an ancient abbey with a high heritage value via its possible uses (FPI105). Moreover, FPI that initially display a foresight orientation are not rare (18%), whether they consist in designing tomorrow’s rural train station (FPI035), imagining the future of an entire *département* by 2033 (FPI050), or even rethinking the impact of digital technologies on the workplace on the scale of society as a whole (FPI194). Therefore, one of the characteristics of FPI lies in this tension between a constantly territorialized problem framing on the one hand and a possible ambition to take things beyond this – a tension that finds its expression in the considerations of designers themselves regarding “upscaling”.

## 2.2. Four problem framings of innovation and the publics concerned

Beyond these general remarks, four types of problem framing appear to be able to be distinguished among the FPI collected in our corpus, each of which describes a certain territory of innovation, a definition of the publics concerned, and a precise construction of issues.

The first understands public innovation from the position of a neighbourhood, town, *commune*, or group of *communes*. It is therefore the space that is simultaneously

physical, social, economic, and cultural that constitutes the subject of this problem framing, whether this consists in contemplating the planning of a housing area (FPI159), rethinking the revival of a run-down city centre (FPI187), or promoting the identity of area recently brought into the spotlight (FPI046). The scope contemplated by the different projects can prove to vary greatly: the bank of a waterway for the project that consisted in consulting with inhabitants to contemplate modifications to the Saône (FPI010); a tramway for the project that attempted to understand the mobility of the inhabitants of Stains (FPI010); a neighbourhood for collecting the testimonials of the inhabitants of an outlying area undergoing renovation (FPI089); and an entire *département* for the project based on a foresight mission to the heart of the Gironde to question residents place by place, using a specially-outfitted bus (FPI050). If we take into consideration that the general issue relating to design techniques pertains to the formatting of reality via artefacts destined to make action possible (Norman, 1993), these FPI express a key focus: shaping the expression of publics from the position of a given territory so that their experiences can take on a comprehensible form. Innovations, which at times integrate a social science inquiry approach or proceed more intuitively by producing information artistically, specifically concern the formats devised to communicate these experiences: maps, travelling exhibitions, video clips, etc. They describe a participationist ideal that is potentially associated with political issues pertaining to democratic life (Walker, McQuarrie and Lee, 2015; *Politix*, 2006; Blondiaux, 2008), and that shares a “family likeness” with similar initiatives that are already found in urban matters (Arab, Özdirlik and Vivant, 2016; Deviste and Ouvrard, 2015). There is nevertheless a nuance: what appears to be important is not only allowing the residents of a city or neighbourhood to participate, but also making this participation known in such a way that it is able to capture publics whose concern is deemed to be strategic (passersby, administrative authorities, etc.). This problem framing of the territory, through the question of space and participation, is behind more than 40% of the FPI collected in our corpus and is therefore of prime importance.

A second way of conceiving of innovation encourages the examination of public action from the point of view of its facilities. Whether this consists in reflecting on the uses of a future travelling multimedia library intended for rural *communes* in Auvergne faced with significant changes (FPI037), rethinking the reception area of a

geriatric hospital in Strasbourg for patients suffering from cognitive disorders (FPI001), proposing original sign posting at the high school in Givors in collaboration with stakeholders (FPI145), or designing a new space for handicapped people in Val d'Oise destined to facilitate their lives (FPI102), it is through the way in which the public is received and the relationship with users that the territory is problematized. Knowledge of administrative trajectories, the experiences of users and, more broadly, the use of places often take place through phases of immersion, in which designers are in contact with the public and professionals. This results in the production of unusual artefacts, given that the purpose is to equip the new users with new information or action devices (sign posts, digital interfaces, documentary media, etc.) intended to increase their ability to appropriate spaces. These spaces may moreover be targeted for redevelopment. Therefore, in this case, the territory is mainly understood through spaces of reception, and public action is problematized through the issue of accessibility. This conception is by no means negligible: it comes in second place among the innovations collected in our study, and involves almost 30% of FPI.

A third way of deploying design approaches within administration consists in focusing on its organization. At times these approaches involve the work spaces or the equipment of agents, such as: the “offices of the future” that the Regional Council of the Pays de Loire is making an effort to think up as a part of a foresight exercise (FPI124); the “mobile offices” provided to the professionals at the Parc régional de Millevaches in Limousin to allow them to hold their meetings while travelling (FPI174); or the work tools of the agents at departmental entities of the Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse in Seine-Saint Denis (child protection services) (FPI177). These may also concern the regulatory procedures whose reconfiguration they encourage, such as the regulations regarding public procurement and the tendering process that delimit the activity of territorial entities (FPI127) or the management of European funds (FPI125). Lastly, they encourage the rethinking of decision-making processes in the strict sense, by providing actors with new tools to manage a high school (FPI112) or to offer ground-breaking digital interfaces to help in strategic decision-making for the army (FPI137). This is thus often a matter of solving the problem of coordination between actors, whether for a school, a local government, a sector of economic activity declared to be strategic, or a battlefield. The territory put

to the test by FPI appears to be that of organization, considered from the position of the diversity of professionals, as well as regulations, procedures, or hierarchies. Even though we did not initially expect to encounter this way of conceiving of design approaches, it occupies third place in our corpus and accounts for almost 20% of all the projects inventoried.

Finally, a fourth way of problematizing public action is through approaches conceiving of the public as a general entity, without specifically designating or problematizing any particular territory. In collaboration with government ministers or the Etalab, which is responsible for the open public data portal, this is the case of a number of digital innovations proposing: tools for visualizing data on prostate cancer (FPI36); a digital dictionary of Egyptology (FPI138); or cultural production offering an unprecedented compilation of elements (FPI054). It is furthermore also the case of: training and meeting projects, such as the invitation sent by La 27<sup>e</sup> Région to a small group of public officials from different fields to reflect on the work of the elected official (FPI199); the production of use scenarios regarding the reduction in the energy divide as part of research overseen by la Cité du Design (FPI099); the stage design of a temporary exhibition on food (FPI152); or the production of reports intended to clarify public decisions regarding sustainable development (FPI011). This understanding of the territory and of the public nevertheless seems to correspond to a minority, and involves less than 15% of all FPI examined.

We have just described four ways of conceiving of public innovation by design. It is worthwhile to consider these orientation trends, without the problem framings that they describe necessarily being mutually exclusive of one another. Furthermore, certain FPI appear to combine the features of many of them: creating a waste sorting and recovery centre for a community of rural *communes* in Limousin pertains both to the issue of the use and management of waste infringing on a specific territory, and to the creation of public facilities for local governments (FPI166); the rearrangement of the workspaces of a maternity ward at the Strasbourg CHU simultaneously addresses the issues of public facilities for women giving birth that the innovation intends to set up at the centre, and challenges regarding the organization of professionals' work (FPI002) (Table 6, Figure 3).

	Problem framing 1	Problem framing 2	Problem framing 3	Problem framing 4
“Territories” concerned	Space	Equipment	Organization	Undetermined
Definition of publics	Inhabitants	Users	Professionals	Undetermined public
Issues of the FPI	Participation	Accessibility	Coordination	Information
Purpose of the intervention (example)	Consultation of inhabitants of the territory for the development of the public space	Reorganization of public reception spaces	Co-creation of digital or documentary interfaces to equip decision-making	Visualization of open public data around a specific subject
A few emblematic FPI	FPI016 FPI087 FPI111	FPI004 FPI034 FPI151	FPI108 FPI163 FPI172	FPI013 FPI054 FPI099
Number of FPI concerned in the corpus	92	64	45	26
% of the corpus (*)	45%	31%	22 %	13 %

Table 6: FPI and their problem framing

(\*) The data exceeds the 204 FPI in the corpus because a minority of them simultaneously correspond to multiple problem framings.

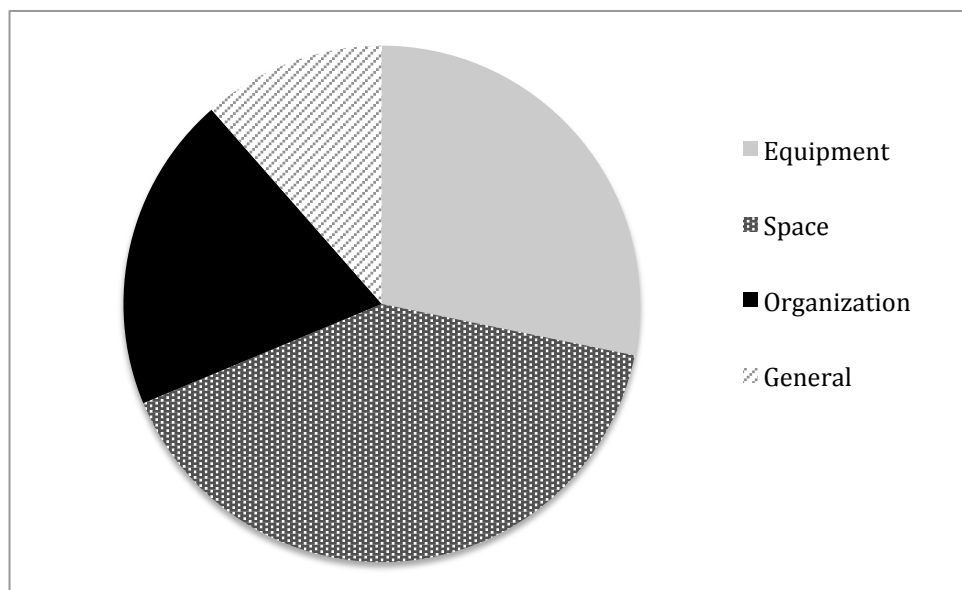


Figure 3: FPI and their problem framing

\*

As a conclusion, two elements can be highlighted.

The first regards the breadth of the phenomenon and its longevity. Developed in the United Kingdom and Denmark, and at Stanford University, and resembling what we find more generally in other countries (Tonurist, Kattel and Lamber, 2015), the concept of design applied to public services has been encountering undeniable success in France over barely the last ten years. However, is it an underlying trend that reflects long-lasting changes in the forms of innovation in government administrations, or is it a temporary symptom, the product of what malicious people would call “just a fad”? How can we not think of the multitude of management tools and managerial approaches – quality circles, total quality control, the “six sigma” method, etc. – whose life cycles have been described by research, including their beginning, their peak, and then their decline (Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999)? Is it not possible that the inventory of FPI in our database itself follows such a trajectory, by revealing, following a growth phase, a certain decline in the number of experiments currently underway? While the answer remains open, we note that, contrary to the management tools just mentioned, service design approaches do not align themselves solely with one hitherto unseen methodology. They originate from a professional environment capable of giving original substance to the phenomenon that we are examining here, and for some their promoters advocate a veritable political vision of the transformation of public action.

The second element with which we wish to conclude concerns the quality of the phenomenon observed. While it cannot be denied that there exist design approaches within public services, the issues that are inspired by them nonetheless take on evolving forms. Among the four ways of conceiving of innovation that we have identified, the FPI that are created based on the issues of space and participation are in clear decline after having experienced the most growth. On the other hand, FPI mobilizing design from the point of view of organizational issues internal to the government appear to be experiencing constant growth (Figure 4). Is this a case of the shift of the objects of designers’ interventions, transitioning from service design to process design? However, while it is possible to put the services provided by a



government or its organization to the test of design methods, are there limits that make it more difficult to deploy the approaches proposed at other levels, such as public policies? Can everything be “designed”?

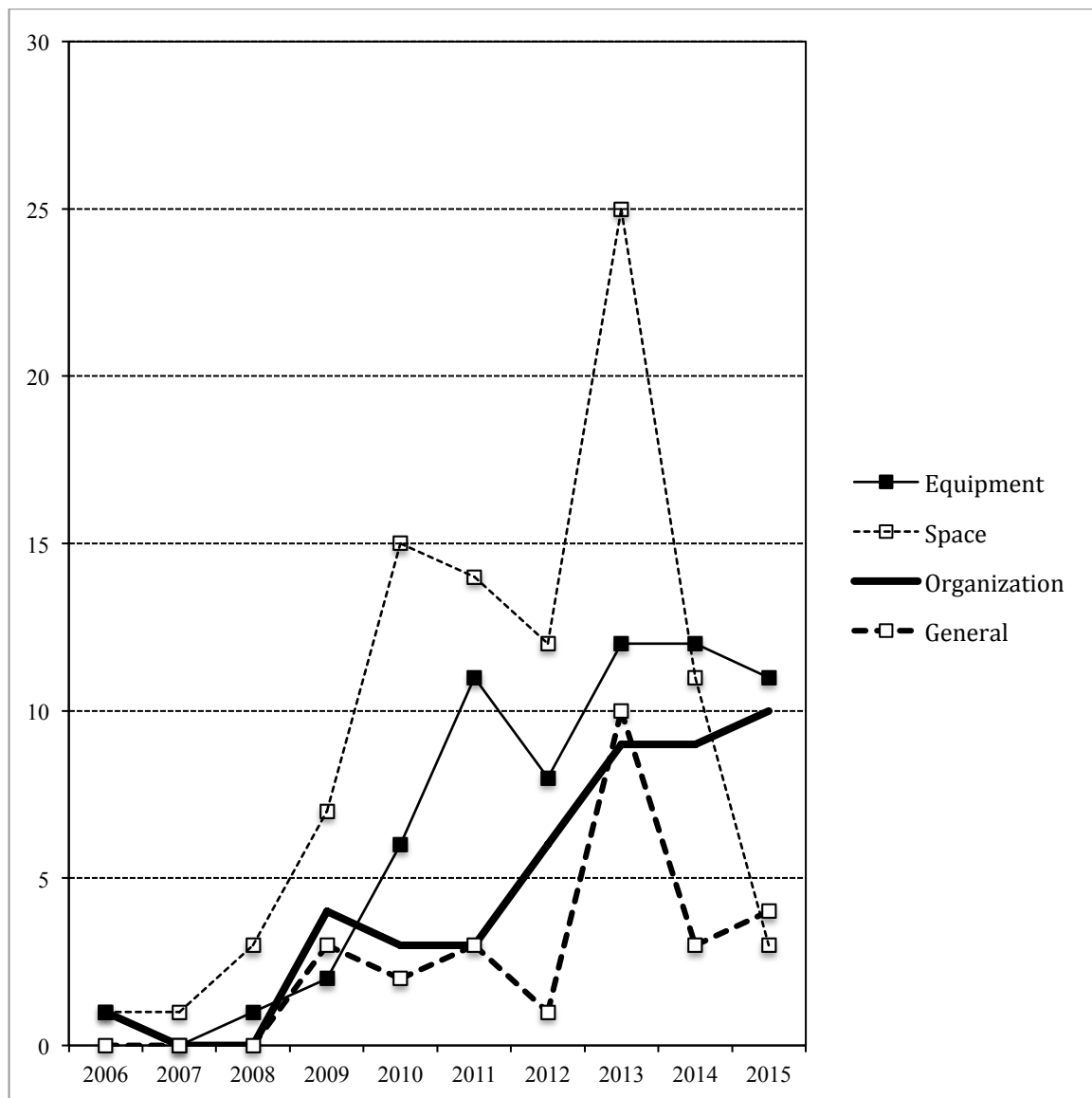


Figure 4: Chronological evolution of the problem framing of FPI (2006-2015), source: FIP-Explo Database

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## Annexe : Liste des FIP de la base de données (\*)

N°	INTITULÉ DE LA FIP	N°	INTITULÉ DE LA FIP
FIP001	BON SÉJOUR	FIP050	33TOURS
FIP002	ARBRE DE VIE	FIP051	DESTINATION 2030
FIP003	A MESURE	FIP052	EXPÉRIENCE FRANCE
FIP004	SENTIERS QUI BIFURQUENT	FIP053	ÉNERGIE INFO
FIP005	CLIMAT ET TRANSITION	FIP054	CULTURE IS DATA
FIP006	PIXELMANIA	FIP055	SMART RISK
FIP007	TUILERIES	FIP056	OPENDATA CUB
FIP008	DE LA COULEUR	FIP057	EDF BBC
FIP009	DIX MOIS TOUT	FIP058	SERVICELAB ORLEANS
FIP010	RIVES DE SAONE	FIP059	SERVICELAB BORDEAUX
FIP011	LES PRATIQUES DE DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE	FIP060	SNCF DESIGN PRODUIT
FIP012	CARRÉ DE SOIE L'ESPRIT DES LIEUX	FIP061	VISION+21
FIP013	PORTRAIT ROBOT	FIP062	URBACT
FIP014	STRATÉGIE SERVICE PART DIEU	FIP063	TESR FORUM
FIP015	VILLE ET HANDICAP	FIP064	AGENDA 21 GIRONDE
FIP016	CARRÉ DE SOIE ILLUSTRATION PROSPECTIVE	FIP065	AGENDA 21 FR
FIP017	PART DIEU OUTIL DE PRISE EN COMPTE DES USAGERS	FIP066	CITY ECOLAB
FIP018	LYON GERLAND	FIP067	SEE/K SUSTAINABLE EVERYDAY EXPLORATIONS
FIP019	7 VISIONS POUR LE BIPOLE DE GERLAND	FIP068	CITÉ DU DESIGN
FIP020	LA MORT C'EST GRAVE?	FIP069	DESIGNING HOUSEHOLD
FIP021	METROPOLE DE LYON	FIP070	LUPI
FIP022	LA MÉTROPOLE PAROLE D'HABITANTS	FIP071	ONE PLANET MOBILITY CITIES
FIP023	SERVICE COMMUN UNIVERSITÉ	FIP072	RÉINVENTER L'ÉCLAIRAGE
FIP024	GAREMIX	FIP073	TARKETT
FIP025	CAMPUS OUVERT	FIP074	MOBIL'EASY
FIP026	VERS UNE CITOYENNETÉ AUGMENTÉE	FIP075	ACCESSIBILITÉ LUMIÈRE
FIP027	ENVIRONNEMENT DE TRAVAIL DE L'ELU	FIP076	ACCÈS AU JARDIN
FIP028	LA REGION BASE CONSOMMATION	FIP077	VALORISATION DU JARDIN
FIP029	VERS LA CREATION D'UNE MAISON DE SANTÉ	FIP078	OKO
FIP030	L'ACTIVATEUR NUMERIQUE DU TERRITOIRE	FIP079	YOUPONT
FIP031	LE LYCÉE HAUTE QUALITÉ HUMAINE	FIP080	CYCLIDE CONVIVIALE
FIP032	HABITER LE LYCÉE	FIP081	STRUCTURE CONVIVIALE POUR L'ÉCOLE
FIP033	PENSER L'AVENIR DES ESPACES NUMERIQUES PATRIMOINE GASTRONOMIQUE ET CIRCUITS COURTS AU LYCÉE	FIP082	BOITE AUX LETTRES DU FUTUR
FIP034	LA GARE RURALE DE DEMAIN HABITER WAZEMMES. COMMENT INVESTIR L'ESPACE PUBLIC	FIP083	INTERFACE DIALOGUE
FIP035	LES NOUVEAUX USAGES DE LA MEDIATHÈQUE	FIP084	MONNAIE DE PARIS
FIP036	REPENSER ENSEMBLE LES ACHATS DURABLES	FIP085	HÔPITAUX DE MARSEILLE
FIP037	L'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE AU COIN DE MA RUE	FIP086	GUIDE DE L'INNOVATION CENTRÉE USAGERS
FIP038	REPENSER L'ACCUEIL EN MAIRIE GARE(S) BZH. NOUVEAUX USAGES, NOUVELLES FORMES	FIP087	CITY 2030
FIP039	TRANSFO PACA	FIP088	EVA
FIP040	TRANSFO CHAMPAGNE-ARDENNE	FIP089	MERIADECK
FIP041	TRANSFO BOURGOGNE	FIP090	TIERS LIEUX
FIP042	TRANSFO PAYS DE LA LOIRE	FIP091	QUARTIER LIBRE
FIP043	LA FABRIQUE DES FUTURS	FIP092	RÉSERVOIR À SOUVENIR PORT BOUC
FIP044	UNIVERSITÉ RURALE	FIP093	RÉSERVOIR À SOUVENIR NÎMES
FIP045	STATION SERVICES PUBLICS	FIP094	RSA ACCUEIL ET ORIENTATION DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES
FIP046	ETUDE PROXIMITÉ	FIP095	L'ACCUEIL DES USAGERS
		FIP096	COLLECTE SELECTIVE
		FIP097	MOBILITE DES PARISIENS VIEILLISSANTS
		FIP098	COLLECTE SELECTIVE

FIP099	REDUCTION DE LA FRACTURE ENERGETIQUE	FIP156	BOSSIEU
FIP100	NOUVEAUX CONCEPTS DE DECHETERIE EN GIRONDE EVALUATION PROACTIVE PAR LES PAIRS DE L'ACTE 2 DE L'A21	FIP157	CHIRENS
FIP101	MAISON DEPARTEMENTALE DES PERSONNES HANDICAPEES	FIP158	DU TEIL
FIP102	PROMOTION SANTE JEUNES	FIP159	PARC DU VERCORS
FIP103	ABBAYE DE MAUBUISSON	FIP160	HLM PRAIRIE CREST
FIP104	DIRECTION DE L'EDUCATION	FIP161	LAVOIR MAISON DE QUARTIER
FIP105	MAISON DEPARTEMENTALE DE L'ENFANCE	FIP162	PARC CULTUREL PAYSAGER
FIP106	INSERTION RSA	FIP163	HÉBERGEMENT RAPATRIÉS FEYZIN
FIP107	RSA	FIP164	COBONNE AVENIR
FIP108	MAINTIEN A DOMICILE	FIP165	ACCUEIL DE SENIORS EN CENTRE VILLE
FIP109	GESTION DES CRUES DS BASSIN DE LA LOIRE	FIP166	CRÉATION D'UNE RESSOURCERIE
FIP110	GRANDE CANTINE	FIP167	PROJET POUR LES JEUNES
FIP111	L'ÉCHANTILLONNEUR DE LYCÉE	FIP168	ASSISES DE LA TRANSITION
FIP112	RÉENCHANTER L'ACTION PUBLIQUE-1	FIP169	ATELIERS PARTICIPATIFS DU NUMÉRIQUE
FIP113	LA POINTEUSE N°2	FIP170	ASSISES NATIONALES DE LA MÉDIATION NUMÉRIQUE
FIP114	RÉENCHANTER L'ACTION PUBLIQUE-2	FIP171	WORKSHOP BREST BIOTOPES
FIP115	FORUM DES VILLAGES FUTURS	FIP172	FORMER LES AGENTS AUX MÉTHODES D'ANIMATION
FIP116	CRASHTEST DES POLITIQUES PUBLIQUES	FIP173	PAYS DES VALLONS DE VILAINE
FIP117	L'HOPITAL MÉTROPOLE	FIP174	PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DE MILLEVACHES RÉPENSER LE FORMULAIRE DE DEMANDE DE PRESTATION DE LA MDPH
FIP118	NUANCIER DE FORMATION	FIP175	DÉVELOPPER L'ACCUEIL TEMPORAIRE DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DÉPENDANTES
FIP119	MIEUX MANGER AU LYCÉE	FIP176	PROTECTION JUDICIAIRE JEUNESSE
FIP120	RÉGIONALES 2028	FIP177	QUARTIER LIBRE
FIP121	REPENSER LA CARTE LYCÉO	FIP178	QUARTIER NUMÉRIQUE CRÉTEIL
FIP122	EMPLOI D'AVENIR	FIP179	LES CIRCUITS COURTS DE L'ÉNERGIE
FIP123	BUREAUX DU FUTUR	FIP180	UN ESPACE DE RESTAURATION POUR LE LYCÉE
FIP124	FONDS EUROPEEN	FIP181	LE VIVRE ENSEMBLE À CRÉTEIL
FIP125	HUB PME	FIP182	DE CONQUES À SON TERRITOIRE LE RÉSEAU DES ACTEURS PATRIMOINE MONDIAL. VAL DE LOIRE
FIP126	COMMANDE PUBLIQUE	FIP183	AMÉLIORER L'ACCUEIL AU BÂTIMENT ADMINISTRATIF DES 4AS
FIP127	DESIGN PUBLIC LOCAL	FIP184	FORMATION-ACTION SUR L'INNOVATION DANS L'ACCUEIL DES PUBLICS
FIP128	RÉENCHANTER L'ACTION PUBLIQUE-0	FIP185	BUREAU ÉPHÉMÈRE D'ACTIVATION URBAINE (B.E.A.U.)
FIP129	RÉGIONS INGÉNIEUSES	FIP186	BIEN VIEILLIR DANS LE MORTAINAIS
FIP130	MA VIE DE CH'TI	FIP187	GÉNÉRATION RÉACTIVE
FIP131	VOYAGE D'ÉTUDE A COPENHAGUE	FIP188	LES ASSISES CULTURELLES DE MONTREUIL
FIP132	LA POINTEUSE N°1	FIP189	SÉMINAIRE MÉTROPOLE
FIP133	COSMOGRAPHIE	FIP190	INFOLAB DE L'ORIENTATION
FIP134	STRATIGRAPHIES	FIP191	DIGIWORK-1
FIP135	DATAVIZ	FIP192	DIGIWORK-2
FIP136	VESTA COSY	FIP193	MACHINE À CAFÉ
FIP137	VÉGA	FIP194	HABITANTS CONNECTÉS
FIP138	SERVICE SUR CARTOGRAPHIE	FIP195	LES ENJEUX DE LA VILLE INTELLIGENTE
FIP139	MONTPELLIER LAB	FIP196	LES ÉCLAIREURS : LE MÉTIER DE L'ÉLU LOCAL
FIP140	LE LIEU DIT	FIP197	LES ÉCLAIREURS : L'ÉLU INOFFENSIF
FIP141	À NOUS LES MARRONIERS	FIP198	C'IT LYCÉES
FIP142	VOIE DES CONFLUENCES	FIP199	DESIGN OÙ ES-TU ?
FIP143	LA VOIE VERTE	FIP200	EAU DE PARIS
FIP144	C'EST QUOI LE DESIGN?	FIP201	REFECTION D'ESPACE DU CCO
FIP145	DESIGN ENSEMBLE	FIP202	PARC URBAIN "DESIGNED IN NANTES"
FIP146	BABORD COLLECTIF	FIP203	COVOITURAGE DU GRANDLYON
FIP147	JALON		
FIP148	PARKUR		
FIP149	LA TRACTION DU QUARTIER		
FIP150	JEUNESSE DE ST MARTIN DE CRAU		
FIP151	EXPOSITION : PARCOURS DES ALIMENTS		
FIP152	ACCUEILLIR LA RETRAITE		
FIP153	IMAGINER LES FUTURS USAGES DU TRAM EXPRESS		
FIP154	NORD		
FIP155	MARATHON DE LA CRÉATIVITÉ		

\* la FIP048 datant de 2016, elle n'a pas été prise en compte dans l'analyse