



Thecamp under the watchful eye of a territorial science researcher (3/3)

Raphaël Besson

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Raphaël Besson

Directeur de Villes Innovations

Chercheur associé à PACTE-CNRS

r.besson@villes-innovations.com

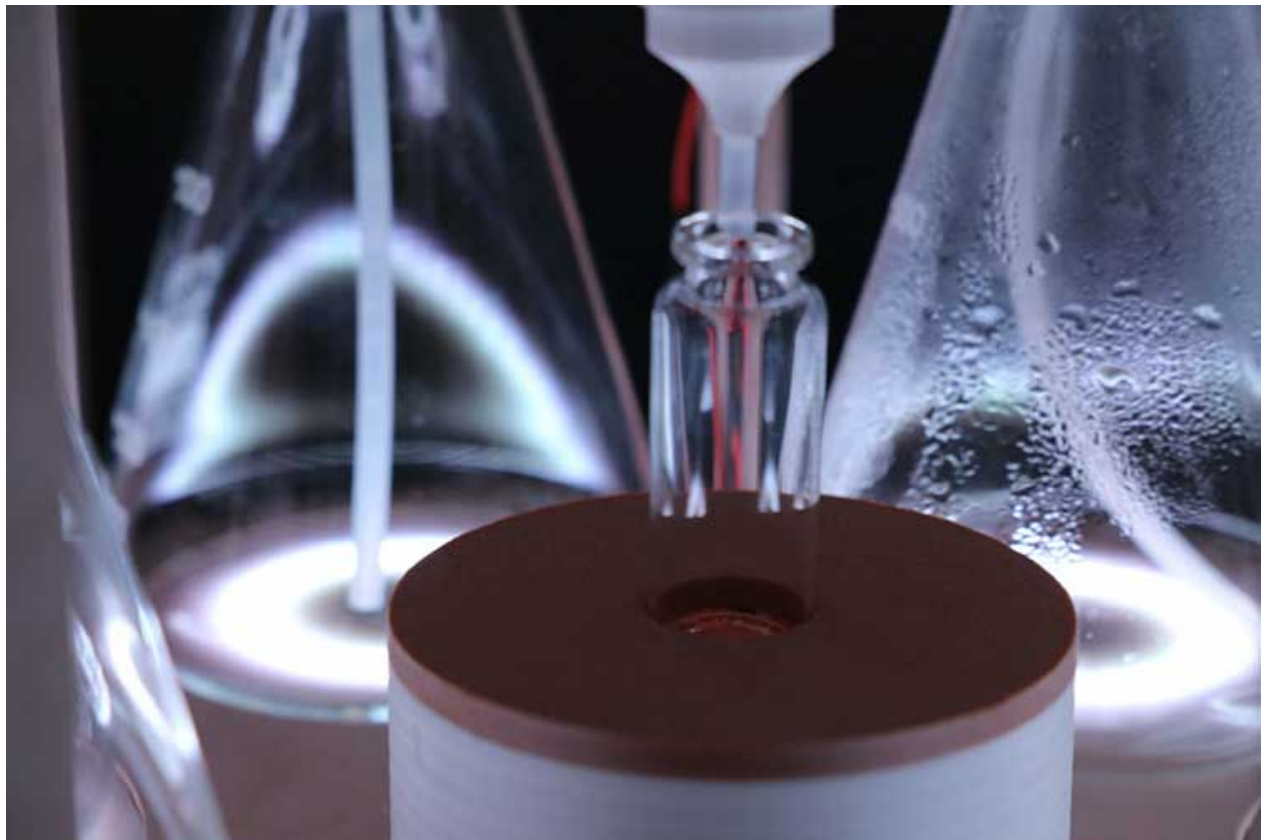
THECAMP UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF A
TERRITORIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHER (3/3)
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The researcher Raphaël Besson investigates the Hive, a creative residence of thecamp in Aix-en-Provence (France), since September 2017. The time has come to present the prototypes of the first session. Here is his report.

On March 27, twenty residents of Hive#1 at thecamp presented the prototypes they have developed during their six months of collaborative residency programme. Among the projects, the autonomous “drone-bee” capable of measuring real-time air quality (Beeyond), an olfactory device generated by the encounter between two individuals (Capsule) or an installation artwork giving passengers the opportunity to immerse themselves into a sight and sound halo, responding to their heartbeat (Interlude).



Capsule, an encounter scent; prototype by Florence Grosse and Tiffany Sun. © thecamp

Other Hivers presented interactive costumes capable of transcribing performers' emotions (Wearkit), a new material conceived from recycled oyster shells (Raw Material), a digital application to discover tales (Tale), or tiles for music festivals, likely to generate energy from spectators steps (Mergy).

“We need a lot of people to produce energy”

These projects explore a variety of themes related to environment, energy, mobility, public space, performing arts, to the social link, culture or to quality of life. Questioning the contribution of connected objects, of immersive experiences and digital and low-tech technologies is the start of a renewal, from a humanistic point of view, of the dialogue between art, science, innovation, technologies and society. The challenge is to transform “technologies of confinement,” “heteronomous technologies” into “open and convivial technologies,” capable of increasing autonomy, cooperation and creation (in Ivan Illich words, theorician of industrial society and author of *Tools for Conviviality*, 1973). To rebuild this “intuitive, experiential ways of knowing” (André Gorz, *Ecologica*, 2008): dancing and jumping on tiles in front of the stage to generate energy, using organic waste to turn them into creative materials, telling stories and increase the transmission of tales from around the world, expressing emotional feelings by modifying the shape and texture of the costumes depending on performer’s heartbeats and muscle activity.

By allowing experiments and a variety of immersive or creative social situations, the prototypes shall help us question and provide a better understanding of the nexus between human, technology and the world in transition. By doing so, *Interlude* explores the space-time continuum of hypermobility by creating deceleration infrastructures. “The idea behind the project is not only to show technology: it’s mainly to play with a multisensory device inspired by synesthetic principles, explains Nanaui Amoros Silva, one of the project owners. It’s about reconnecting with oneself, and focus on your breathing.” For Florence Grosse, graphic designer and Hiver, *Capsule* “captures the very special moment of a first encounter through an olfactory journey.” The challenge of prototype *Mergy* “is to convert people’s energy into electricity during festivals : we need a lot of people to produce energy, so we have to take advantage of meetings and of special moments of relax between friends,” says Apolline Rigaut, innovation manager and Hiver.

Prototypes to be followed

These projects are high value-added innovations that can be redily applied to multiple areas for action. *Beeyond* provides an analysis of the air quality (at high altitude), and allows a study of the

displacement of haze pollution, as well as the modelling and mapping of air in 3 dimensions. These areas of expertise have a real relevance for the business partners Air Paca, Safe Competitiveness Cluster and for the Laboratory Tera Environment, that have accompanied them throughout their development and growth. Soon, a real scale drone test should be carried out in the port of Marseille. In the short term, the projects founders David Erhun, Walid Ben Haj Salah and Alexandre Amiel hope to be part of thecamp accelerator, to be incubated.



Beyond, the "drone-bee" for environment. © thecamp

Mergy will be tested at several music festivals, including Dour (Belgium), Cabaret Vert (Charleville-Mézières) and Marsatac (Marseille). A partnership agreement with Capenergies (competitiveness cluster in south region) is being considered to test a smart local power grid. A collaboration with the Youth Camp Experience of thecamp is also under discussion to work on a scale model of the device with children.

The installation Capsule will shortly be tested at Marseille's Méjanes library, while Interlude will be experimented in partnership with SNCF Gares & Connexions at Aix en Provence train station next

summer (2018) and shown in several Paris and Montréal festivals. Francesco Garbo is confident: “We have opportunities to work with other train stations, other connected spaces and even hotel resorts.” As for the Raw Material the partners (Coquillages du Roy René, in Aix-en-Provence and Tuilerie Bossy, métiers d’art in Gardanne) want to organise a recycling loop and recovery of waste. Wearkit was tested in March 2018 during a residency program with modern dancers, and will be presented in C2 Montréal and then in Paris, at the VivaTech show. Its founders will soon join another artistic residency in Italy.

The development opportunities differ in the methods and processes implemented to explore the future, built on new economic models as a cross of culture, entrepreneurship, open source and collaboration. This is the case of Wearkit, an open source tool to create interactive costumes, that developers want to incubate at thecamp.

The Hive provides a unique opportunity to help the Hivers’ professional integration: Walid Ben Haj Salah was hired within thecamp communication team, David Erhun is leading a few months mission on international cooperation on the innovation campus, Julie Guidicelli joined thecamp Ressourcerie (Ressourceries are local or regional not-for-profits or co-operatives with mandates to turn wastes into resources), Florence Grosse is now part of the fablabs ICI Marseille and ICI thecamp, Francesco Garbo will make videos on Hive#2 (a documentary coproduced is pending for Hive #3), Stéphane Garti is working on an artistic hackaton in Brain Computer Interface, that would take place in thecamp by the end of this year.

The hacker heart of thecamp

While the devices provided by the Hive #1 overall kept their promises, the collaborative residence is still seeking its own model. Stephane Natkin, director of the ENJMIN (Ecole nationale du jeu et des médias interactifs numériques) and mentor of the first session, assesses: “What is the role of the Hive? Is it to train people, to produce one-time projects with a strong creative and artistic dimension, or to come up with economically feasible projects?”

How is the Hive positioned within thecamp ecosystem? And what actually is the real status of the Hivers and their projects? Are they students in residency or creative persons whose chief function is

to engage intellectually the explorers minds, and disrupt the traditional models of innovation? What is the nature of the Hivers obligations towards thecamp, especially when the devices produced generate a significant economic value?



Presentation of The Hive and of the first prototypes, May 27th, Maif Social Club, Paris. © thecamp

It seems essential to introduce more hackers or disrupting stakeholders within the Hive to instil continuously some underground and bring new life to the very heart of thecamp. Sociology often ascribed to the “outsiders” (Becker, 1963) an ability to deconstruct the standards and provoke disruptive innovations. The future of thecamp can only come through its goodwill to integrate the periphery into the ecosystem, and by interacting with key accounts and major financial institutions. This commitment to organise cooperation between central and peripheral actors should strengthen the “middle ground” status of the Hive.

The Hive is a living laboratory, in a situation of perpetual prototyping. The very issue, asserts co-director Eric Viennot, is to “learn from this first experiment to help us move forward.” If so, “in the

future, the Hive will be intergenerational, opened up to the outside world and the projects will be developed with our partners to complement our innovation approach.”