Advocating for Participation in Design: about Designers' and Non-designers' New Roles and Responsibilities

Clémentine Schelings, University of Liège, Belgium

Xaviéra Calixte, University of Liège, Belgium

Catherine Elsen, University of Liège, Belgium

Abstract

Witnessing the resurgence of interest for citizen participation in the making of cities, this paper questions the roles and the responsibilities of designers and non-designers in participatory design processes. Twelve main themes are considered as key regarding the posture adopted by (non-)designers during participatory and co-design processes, as revealed by in-depth interviews conducted with six Belgian academics and practitioners, all experts of citizen participation. The paper highlights the diversity of roles and responsibilities of both actors but especially focuses on the amplifying role of the designers, who are expected to assume many new responsibilities. Our main contribution is to clarify those roles and responsibilities and thereby pointing all the elements that the participatory stakeholders should take into account when participating, designing participation and advocating for participation.

Keywords

Participatory Design, Designers, Non-designers, Roles, Responsibilities, Participatory Advocacy

Introduction

Designing the city is no longer the sole prerogative of professional designers such as architects, engineers or urban planners. Instead, it is becoming more common to engage citizens in the making of their lived environments (Biau, Fenker and Macaire 2013). Indeed, it appears that while designers are tending to keep their usual roles and responsibilities, additional ones appear and some of them are shared with citizens from a variety of backgrounds (Reymen, Dorst and Smulders 2009), referred here as "non-designers". Thus, the participatory mindset is profoundly reshaping the designers' traditional practices and prompts them to adopt a particular posture (Macaire 2009). As they advocate for citizen participation and co-design, increasing numbers of designers are looking for the key to "true" participation, that is to say, a renewed model of participation that does not fall into the traps sometimes set by participatory imperatives, nor turn into arcane sophistication.

Designing citizen participation is sometimes compared to a secret recipe: many delicious ingredients are available at any grocery store but you have to find the perfect combination to create a tasty meal, or at least an edible one. Among the key ingredients for a successful participatory process we find the socio-cultural context (Bacqué and Gauthier 2011), the objectives to be achieved (Glass 1979), the participants' level of involvement (Arnstein 1969) as well as the participatory tools and methods (Rowe and Frewer 2000). Nevertheless, the chef himself, just as the designer implementing a participatory approach, makes his/her own choices and is responsible for the undertaking. The non-designers also have a role to play and the postures adopted by both actors will

definitely impact the whole process. Assuming that (non)designers' roles and responsibilities are decisive, this paper focuses on the clarification of those roles and responsibilities, as well as offering insights resulting from six in-depth interviews.

The article is structured in four additional sections. In the first section, we present a literature review related to participatory design and the associated changing design practices. The following section describes the interview-based methodology used to gather practical, expert knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of designers and non-designers engaged in the participatory processes. The next section outlines the obtained results regarding (non-)designers' roles and responsibilities as depicted by the interviewees. The last section eventually discusses the results and highlights the ambivalence of the designers' roles, which are both reduced in favor of non-designers' participation and amplified by new responsibilities unique to this participatory spirit.

Literature Review

Citizen participation is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. In the late 1960's, participation was the object of bottom-up movements, through which citizens manifested and claimed a voice in decision-making processes (Zetlaoui-Léger 2013). Since the 1980's, representative democracy has progressively given way to the practices of deliberative democracy and the empowerment of citizens in public life (Jacquet and van de Does 2018). Advocacy planning also raised awareness among professional planners, who increasingly think that traditional methods, essentially technical and bureaucratic, should evolve to integrate the citizen perspective (Bacqué and Gauthier 2011). Since that time, professional designers are no longer considered the sole guardians of knowledge, and citizens are recognized to hold crucial information such as their needs, local priorities and experiences, which could enrich the design process (Steen 2011).

In Western countries, citizens are no longer the initiators of their participation; instead it is more often sought by professionals, institutionalized and implemented in a top-down manner (Fung 2006). Whether to respect legislation, to establish public trust or to defuse potential future criticism, many cities indeed currently deploy participatory processes in response to the "participatory obligation" (Rowe and Frewer 2000). In the current socio-environmental context, this renewed attention for participation is further emphasized since citizens' involvement in urban design and city life is considered to be a key toward a new urban ideal (Gooch et al. 2015).

Even though participatory design is a longstanding concept, as well as the subject of renewed interest, the concept of "participation" itself remains quite fuzzy and is open to multiple interpretations, depending particularly on the discipline using it (Luck 2018). Therefore, designing and implementing a participatory process is a full trade, i.e., a complex task requiring specific knowledge and experience. In recent years, city officials therefore have begun to turn to "participation professionals" whose job is to help cities managing their participatory initiatives (Bherer, Gauthier and Simard 2017). Those people have various backgrounds and can be considered the "designers" of the participatory process, even though they are not by and large from the field of design.

Similarly, participating is also recognized as a job per se, since the citizens rely on their specific knowledge and skills to perform their task (Sintomer 2008). Consequently, both designers and non-designers have a crucial part to play in the participatory process

despite the fact that these respective roles can be blurred and are sometimes overlapping or merging (Luck 2003). This new configuration, where users and designers work together, results in new roles for the designer, such as facilitator for instance (Lee 2008). Consequently, citizen participation induces many changes in practice, and requires designers' openness towards the sharing of design activities with end-users, who in turn assume new responsibilities (Fleischmann 2015).

Advocating for participatory design is not obvious and still faces some resistance. In the literature, citizen participation is often associated with many limits, which can undermine the process, prevent its successful implementation or create misunderstanding or even frustration, both for the designers or non-designers (Glass 1979). For instance, late participation leads to inefficient post-assessment of already completely finished projects and participants feel that their contribution is useless (Rowe and Frewer 2000) and that their input is merely token (Arnstein 1969). Actually, some designers experience some difficulties in recognizing citizens as co-creators because they concurrently fear for their profession (Hill 2003) and consider end-users as inexperienced and not useful in a complex design process (Björgvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren 2012). Similarly, city officials are reluctant to increase the number of people involved in policy making because it adds complexity, reduces control over the projects and requires more efforts in terms of facilitation (Blomkamp 2018). This shift in power dynamics from an "expert mindset" to a "participatory mindset" (Sanders 2008) moreover challenges conventional practices and requires a huge operational change, especially in low-responsive bureaucratic systems (Blomkamp 2018).

These barriers are often mobilized as arguments in a blame game. Between poorly prepared non-designers and protectionist designers, both stakeholders point fingers at each other rather than assuming personal responsibilities. Therefore, this paper focuses on the respective roles of both stakeholders, as well as their resulting responsibilities. Our objective is to study and clarify the different postures that can be adopted by the actors regarding participatory processes and changing design practices.

Methodology

Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six Belgian researchers chosen for their expertise in terms of participatory approaches and/or collaborative design processes. They have either designed and established participatory processes themselves or studied them for several years, essentially in the French-speaking, southern region of Belgium defined as the Walloon sociopolitical and cultural context. Since citizen participation is open to multiple interpretations, the interviewees have been selected on the one hand for their experience regarding participatory processes and, on the other hand, for the additional contribution that could stem from their particular field of expertise. Among the interviewees, various disciplines are represented, from architectural and urban design to politics, including education and innovation. Some of the interviewees are also practitioners and relied more on their professional experience than on their academic knowledge through the interview. Of the six respondents, three are from the University of Liège wherein this research was led, and the rest are from other institutions in Belgium (two university research laboratories and one living lab).

Given the small size of the sample, the specific geographic area and the interviewers' various backgrounds, the results should be considered with caution. The findings presented in the following sections provide specific insights into this particular context. Because their relevance and applicability might vary for other settings, this research could be expanded upon and further investigated. To this end, our methodology ought to be seen as replicable to expand future research.

The data was collected through an interview grid unfolding eight questions structured in three main themes. As detailed in Table 1, the questions are not specifically oriented towards the designers' roles and responsibilities. Actually, the research originally focused on a co-constructed schematic view of the participatory process, with a first draft representation provided to the participants to gain perspective from their expertise. The questions were intentionally left open in order to let the interviewees freely comment on the scheme and address the subjects that felt crucial to them. Questions were sometimes skipped and often asked in a different order, depending on the course of the conversation, which lasted about forty-five minutes on average. Our qualitative research method is therefore exploratory and our data analysis relies on principles of the Grounded Theory (Aldiabat and Le Navenec 2011). Indeed, the researcher has no a priori theory that needs to be tested, nor specific expectations regarding the results derived from the interviews, except to gain a deeper understanding of the participatory processes. The objective here is to identify the main concerns, issues and best practices at stake when designing a participative approach. Even though some concepts such as "context", "problem", "theme", "protocol", "actors" or "objectives" are highlighted and organized through the scheme, those generic elements only serve as basis for discussion. The interviewees could add any other missing item, change the relations between them or challenge the relevance of the terminology for instance.

Table 1: Structure of the Interview Grid

Themes	*Questions*
Socio-demographic profile of the interviewee	How long have you been interested in the citizen participation? In what context have you developed an interest for citizen participation?
Personal definition of the citizen participation	With your own words, could you define the citizen participation? Do new technologies have a role to play regarding citizen participation?
Comments about the schematic representation of the participatory process	Does this representation match with your personal vision of participation? Could you prioritize the elements involved in a participative process? Could you identify success and risk factors? Which modifications of the scheme would you like to suggest?

Among all the themes that have been discussed during the interviews, the designers' roles and responsibilities are recurrent key points naturally emerging from the interviewees' experience. This paper presents the main results regarding this particular issue, i.e., the influence of both designers and non-designers, the multiple roles they assume, the corresponding responsibilities and the shifting nature of those roles and responsibilities. Other results regarding additional insights about the schematic representation are not discussed in this article.

Data Processing and Analysis

Once the six audio tracks were transcribed, we exported the text documents using the software NVivo 12 (QSR International) for analysis. The next step was to create a coding tree gathering and organizing the main themes addressed through the interviews. This topics identification required the careful reading of each transcript before determining

the quantity, name and content of the coding nodes. The first author, who conducted the interviews and transcribed them, read the documents several times and led a first identification of the roles and responsibilities of the designers and non-designers. Meanwhile, two additional researchers individually browsed the texts and extracted the main keywords and phrases that referred to stakeholders' roles or responsibilities. All three researchers later triangulated their analyses and collectively established a list of themes that would reflect the collected data as objectively as possible. All three researchers also agreed to focus as much on the recurrences and consensus as on the exceptions, inconsistencies and isolated occurrences. The thematic headings of the coding tree were thus collectively formulated; the resulting coding categories are presented in the following section (Results). The last step of our analysis was the coding part per se, using NVivo and consisting in a final deep thorough reading and an exhaustive selection of the quotes corresponding to each node.

Results

Structure of the Coding Tree

As shown in Figure 1, the coding tree is structured in twelve thematic nodes, which are themselves divided in several sub-nodes, all of them directly extracted from the in-depth interviews. Therefore, their nature and their level of detail are heterogeneous because some very specific topics were mentioned on numerous occasions, while other themes were just reported a few times. In order to ease the coding and especially the analysis, some specific themes were refined in very precise sub-nodes, while more general ones were aggregated with other more or less close notions. For instance, the notions of "implementation", "conviction" and "change in attitudes" were not associated a priori, but were grouped under a new node because we realized they all contribute to the "impact" of the participation. The definition and structuration of nodes were conducted in cooperation with all three researchers, as to insure inter-rater reliability.

Figure 1 is the raw tree structure we used to systematically code the interviews and to identify semantic trends in terms of number of occurrences. However, this representation is not suitable to gain a deep understanding of the participatory dynamic and how the themes identified relate to each other. Therefore, we also propose a second cluster-based representation, Figure 2, as to ease the qualitative understanding of the categories, and how they articulate with each-other in regard of the main steps of any participatory process.

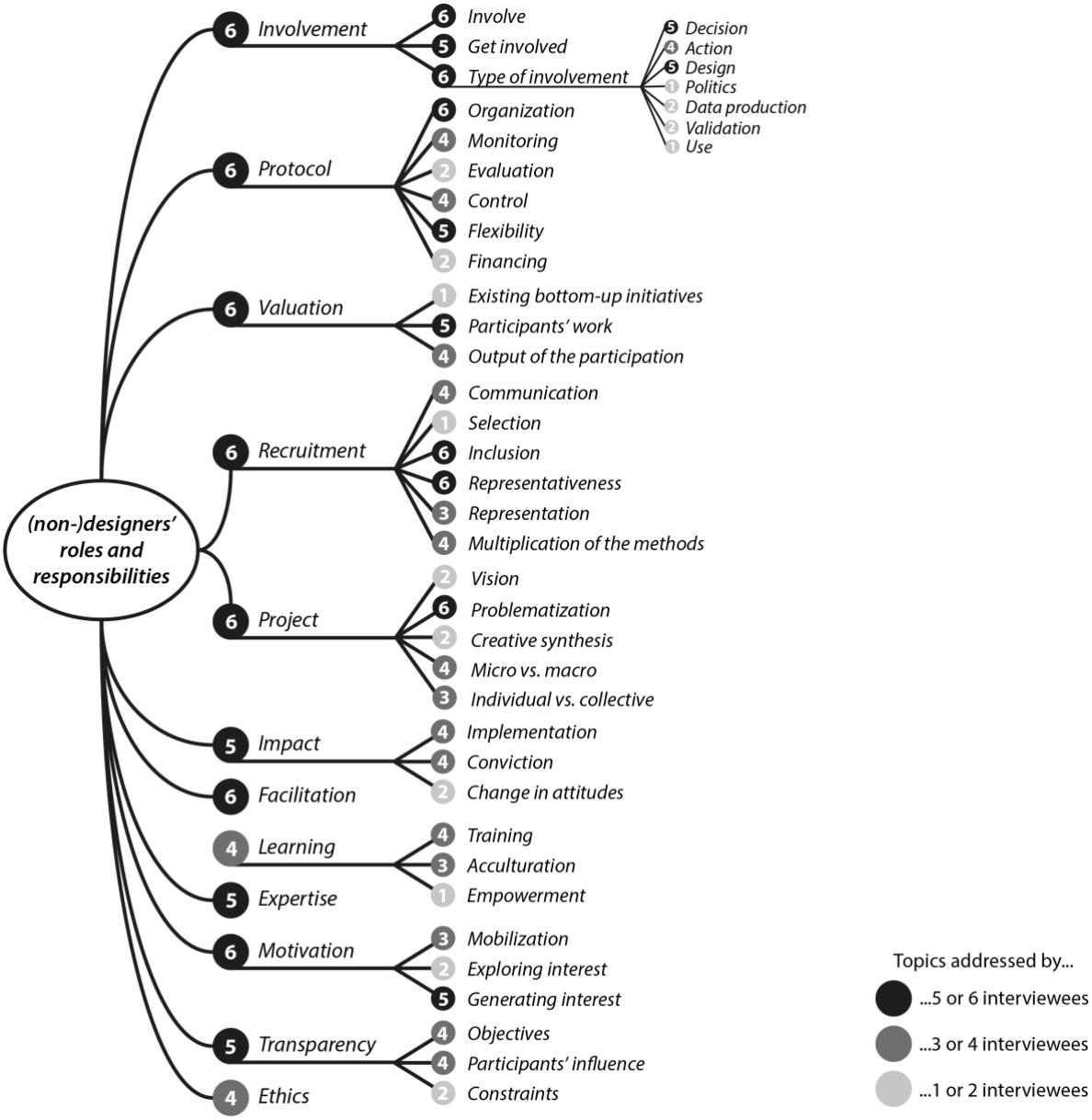

Figure 1: Coding Tree (and Number of Interviewees Addressing each Topic)

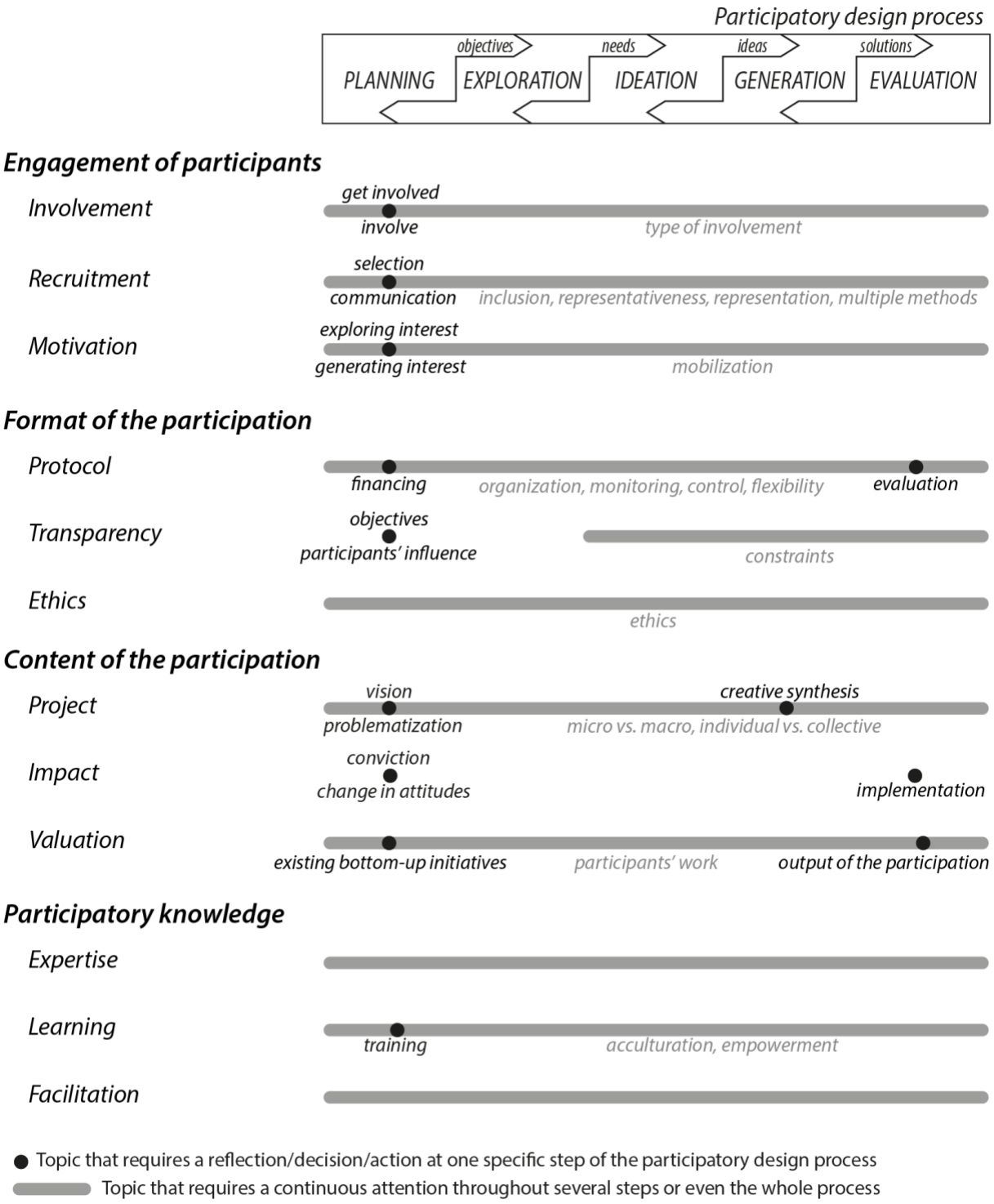

Figure 2: Cluster-based Representation of the Topics and their Articulation in the Participatory Design Process

The twelve higher level nodes, arranged in four clusters, are briefly defined hereafter, but their relation to (non-) designers' roles and responsibilities will be further explained in the following subsections:

Engagement of participants:

- The "involvement" of the actors can take different forms depending on the effective influence participants have on the decision-making design process. They can participate by taking actions, making decisions, producing data, co-designing solutions, testing and/or validating them.
- The "recruitment" step of the participatory process is a fully-fledged topic covering several aspects such as the communication of the initiative, the participants' selection, the choice of the recruitment method, the representativeness of the selected sample, as well as the inclusivity.
- The participants' "motivation" depends on the interest they take in the subject of the participation and on the freedom of action they possess over the project. The motivation is also linked to the mobilization of the population.

Format of the participation:

- The "protocol" corresponds to the formal organization of the participatory process in terms of time, budget, methods, etc. as well as its later monitoring and final evaluation. This node also includes the antagonistic notions of flexibility of and control over the process.
- The node "transparency" addresses the clarification of the objectives of the participatory process itself, the constraints of the design project and the actual influence the participants can have on the progress and the outcome of the process/project.
- "Ethics" by definition echoes other various ethical considerations.

Content of the participation:

- The generic notion "project" encapsulates several sub-notions related to the subject of the participation, i.e., what participants will be working on. The project starts with the problematization phase and the definition of the objectives, before entering the design phase, which requires to find a balance between micro and macro preoccupations and between private or collective interests.
- Providing "impact" to a participatory process requires that all the stakeholders are convinced of its added value, which implies a change in attitude. The impact of participation is also expressed through the achievement of the project, i.e., through tangible outcomes.
- The "valuation" gives weight and value to the participatory process per se, but also to the participants themselves and to the output of the participation.

Participatory knowledge:

- The node "expertise" refers to the knowledge and skills held by a person, be they acquired through professional and educational background or rather through daily experience and ordinary usage.
- "Learning" covers three main aspects: the training of the actors; the acculturation to design or other specific topics; and the participants' empowerment, i.e., the rising awareness and providing means of autonomous action or decision.

- The "facilitation" is a specific participatory skill including the moderation and the management of the participants' group, as well as the control of the participatory process.

In addition, four other coding categories were used: designer, non-designer, responsibility and role. Those four additional terms are not represented in the tree diagram because they correspond to a meta-level of analysis. Indeed, for each encoded quote, we also systematically attributed an actor (designer or non-designer) and a posture (role or responsibility). In this paper, lacking of any clear distinction to be found in the literature, we basically define a role as an explicit practical duty, i.e., a set of tasks that someone has to do, while a responsibility is rather a moral duty, i.e., a less tangible obligation that often requires more thought than action and can be translated variously into practice depending on the stakeholder's awareness, understanding and choices.

Consequently, the thematic headings should not be associated with one actor or another. Every node can contain roles and responsibilities for both actors, even though some categories may remain inherently more unilateral. For instance, according to the six interviewees, the facilitation node only concerns the designers and the corresponding verbatim thus mainly reflect the designer's roles and responsibilities as facilitator during a participatory process. On the other hand, the implication node is a two-way relationship between the designers who seek to engage the non-designers, who in turn choose to get involved in the co-design process with the designers.

Discussed Topics and Data Saturation

As our results come from a limited sample of only six experts, we checked whether the saturation criterion was respected to make sure that those six interviews were enough to reach reliable results. The saturation is defined as "*the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data*" (Guest, Bunce and Johnson 2006, 59). Consequently, the size of the sample may be limited to 'n' people if the person 'n+1' reveals no new essential data compared to the person 'n'. Practically speaking, we verify the saturation by building a table comparing the six interviewees in regard to the themes addressed by each of them. The Table 2 shows that all twelve topics have been discussed as soon as the second interview, even though some were sometimes skipped in the following interviews. With regard to the Belgian context (or at least its French-speaking part), it thus seems that saturation was reached as no new topics were addressed in later phases of the research. It is also worth noticing that I1, I3 and I6 were shorter, or at least less dense in terms of speech rate and length of transcription (3000-4000 words against 6000-7000 words for I2, I4 and I5).

Table 2: Occurrences of Themes Addressed by the Interviewees, and Achievement of Saturation

Interviewees (I) / *Themes*	*I1*	*I2*	*I3*	*I4*	*I5*	*I6*	*Total number of occurrences by theme*
Involvement	10	25	4	9	8	11	67
Protocol	4	2	11	11	18	8	54
Valuation	1	23	3	7	6	1	41
Recruitment	2	8	5	11	3	10	39
Project	3	9	15	4	4	4	39
Impact	3	16	5	10	2	0	36
Facilitation	3	1	7	5	12	3	31
Learning	0	9	0	2	15	3	29
Expertise	0	8	1	3	7	6	25
Motivation	1	6	1	6	4	3	21
Transparency	0	6	4	2	3	2	17
Ethics	0	2	2	2	7	0	13
	27	115	58	72	89	51	412

The following sections will briefly summarize the respondents' discourses with regard to each of the twelve topics. Given space limitations, only few quotes will be added, for the sake of clarification.

Engagement of participants

Initially associated with sponsors' duty to involve citizens in decision-making processes, the engagement of participants now extends beyond the sole participants' selection and presence. This participatory aspect covers participants' involvement, recruitment and motivation. Designers have to keep citizens involved through the whole process and engaged non-designers are expected to pursue the project beyond the participatory process, even after the funding is completed.

Involvement

In a participatory process, the first designer's role is to involve non-designers into the project. This involvement does not only rely on the designer's willingness to give citizens a voice in the design process, but it also relies on the non-designer's willingness to seize this opportunity and to get involved. Even though those roles seem quite obvious, the word "involvement" can be understood in several ways and therefore implies different corresponding positions for the stakeholders. Non-designers may participate by taking actions, contributing to decisions, generating data, making proposals, co-designing, testing, evaluating and/or validating solutions. For one interviewee, who is a political scientist, the citizen involvement is even considered a political commitment, which may otherwise be restricted to voting for instance. This wide range of possibilities goes from relatively passive to very active citizen participation, where non-designers do not only think about solutions but also take part in their implementation. Citizens can also play an even more active role as sponsors if they are the ones who launched a bottom-up participatory process.

This general notion of involvement obviously induces responsibilities for the non-designers, who have to dedicate time and energy to their participation. In addition, citizen participation does not end with the last steps of a project or its funding, but should rather be a continuous endeavor progressively leading to changes in practice. On their side, designers also commit personally as they become an advocate for a less traditional process and for citizen participation, which leads them to delegate part of their "creative power" to non-professionals. It should be noted that in this kind of participatory project,

"*there might be a rather long chain of delegation*" (I4) and the sponsor (very often the city official) frequently hires designers as "participation professionals" who in turn give more or less influence to participants.

Recruitment

One of the designer's key roles is to recruit the participants, that is to say, to select them and especially to choose a selection method that may be as simple as a targeted recruitment of all the interested volunteers, or a more complex method such as a random draw. Each recruiting strategy attracts different audiences with variable levels of interest and motivation. A random selection is more prone to solicit a wider audience and to reach a better representativeness of the sample. Contrary to the "*usual suspects*" (I6) and the "*activists*" (I4), participants chosen by lot would not necessarily have taken part to the project if they had not been invited. Given the fact that some of those selected people will still not show up, some designers directly tap into self-organized groups and work with the more active, self-organized citizens. In the case of political participation, the designer of the process cannot limit the recruitment to specific communities and is obliged to make sure that every citizen has the same chance as the others to be chosen. In this specific case, any person is considered as representative of the whole population in his or her sole capacity as citizen.

In all cases, designers seek to reach the representativeness of the population, i.e., to gather diverse profiles such as "average" citizens, representatives of all the concerned groups of stakeholders, but also hard-to-reach people who seldom express their view. Indeed, designers have the responsibility to be inclusive and to find ways to solicit categories of people like vulnerable population, impoverish persons, speakers of a foreign language, youth, women, refugees, etc. Of course, "*everybody does not have to be involved all the time and in the same way*" (I2) but the designer's role is to multiply the selection approaches (as well as animation techniques and forms of participation) in order to attract diverse socio-demographic groups and avoid designing "*a model with a few elites for a few elites*" (I2).

Recruiting citizens also implies the development of a communication strategy, to identify potential participants in a clear and comprehensible manner. Ambiguous communication risks generating little interest. Thus, it is very important to give enough details on the object of the participation and on the practical modalities. Designers can also endeavor to raise public awareness and circulate information via particular groups, such as neighborhood committees for instance. As far as non-designers are concerned, they still have a responsibility regarding recruitment since they represent their fellow citizens, or even the next generations who will actually use the co-designed solutions.

Motivation

Another responsibility of the designers is to motivate the potential participants and to get them interested in participating by letting them understand the purpose of their involvement, by valuing their effort, by adapting the communication campaign to the audience, etc. The designer can even assess the community interest regarding one particular topic before initiating a participatory process on this issue. People will only feel motivated if their window of opportunity is wide enough, that is to say, if they know that their participation can make a difference in the end product (cf. Section E. Impact).

On the other hand, designers expect non-designers to take part in a mass mobilization, which is more frequent when the "*issue is personal (…) directly affects them*" (I5) and their daily life. When citizens feel an urge to be present because they need to express their voice regarding a sensitive topic, their motivation is very high. In contrast, more general topics that are less crucial at the individual level tend to attract fewer participants, although those present are also very motivated. Thus, when participation is an option, non-designers participate "*by desire*" (I5) or "*intellectual interest*" (I5) and only the most enthusiastic are represented. Consequently, both scenarios bring different publics with different intrinsic motivations, "*from the activist who is very interested by the topic*" (I4) to "*people /who/ come a first time just to see what it is*" (I2) but in each case participants are expected to stay motivated in the long run, which may require an extrinsic motivation such as remuneration (cf. Section E. Valuation).

Format of the participation

Because there is no universal format of the participation, designers have to find a delicate balance between control and flexibility. The protocol is initially defined by designers but will evolve iteratively according to the context and the non-designers' feedback. Designers should moreover organize the participatory process in an ethical and transparent way to avoid any misunderstanding or disappointment.

Protocol

The designer's main role in a participatory process is to set a protocol and to organize the participation in terms of objectives, time, space, budget, methods, etc. The organizer, together with the sponsor, has to set the agenda of the whole process and to define intermediate objectives at every step. In addition, the non-designers have to be informed of what emerges from their participation and should receive feedback of what happened once all the collected data has been pooled and synthetized. Therefore the designer becomes an analyst and monitors the project by sharing materials with the participants, including an initial agenda, a report, results and conclusions. This feedback is very important because it constitutes a form of acknowledgement of the non-designers' involvement, making them therefore more likely to participate again and to feel empowered.

Another designer's responsibility is to carefully choose the time slot of the participatory workshop in order to maximize the number and the diversity of people who may attend. For instance, a meeting in the evening potentially rules out young people and the families. Consequently, the designer should multiply the approaches while preventing the over-solicitation of participants and thus limiting the number of events, or even joining existing local events. Moreover, the general timing of the participation should occur as soon as the upstream stages of the design project. That way, non-designers are involved from the very beginning of the project, and therefore can fully understand their influence on what happens next. Another responsibility regarding time constraints is to pay attention to the cost-benefit ratio, that is to say, to reach a compromise between the resources invested in the project and the actual results for the citizens, but also for the sponsors and the designers.

Alongside this organization, the designer is caught between the duty to control the process and the need to give it some flexibility. On the one hand, the designer is expected to keep a hand on the conduct of the participatory process. As a result, the designer must be the one who sets goals, controls the tempo, defines deadlines, summarizes and registers the

ideas, crystalizes joint decisions and keeps track of everything. Even though participation needs time to bloom, the organizer designer has to make sure that the process will progress to a conclusion "*because you cannot circle around*" (I3) indefinitely. In this context, participants also have a responsibility to acknowledge recorded decisions and to avoid turning back and changing their minds between two participatory sessions for instance. On the other hand, the participatory process is (or should be) flexible in the sense that it adapts to the people present, the context of the project, the target of the participation… and even to the previous steps of the process that also iteratively influence the next ones. Nonetheless, according to one of the interviewees, the adaptability of the process is only possible inside non-institutionalized participation, where conversely in institutionalized processes "*the problem does not predate the invention of the /participatory/ process*" (I4). In the political sphere, a method is sometimes designed a priori, before having any knowledge of the particular context in which it will be implemented, and simply replicated in several situations. In architecture or urban planning however, the method seems rather custom-made or adjusted from previous participatory experiences, but every time unique and thought of as a one-shot process. Nevertheless, there is no need to reinvent the wheel and designers also have to stay abreast of existing proven participatory methods and use them as sources of inspiration. Non-designers also contribute in their own way to the protocol since they have the responsibility to assess it at the end. "*The adjustment of the protocol with the actors' feedback is essential*" (I3) and should occur during the participatory process, thus informing later events.

Transparency

Participatory design processes are often complex but this complexity should not prevent designers from being totally transparent with non-designers. Participants have to be informed at three main levels: their actual influence on the project, the objectives pursued by the participation and the constraints inherent to the design project. This clarification is essential to avoid citizens' confusion and frustration during and after the participatory process.

The aim is to be totally transparent and avoid tokenism, refraining from misleading non-designers with false promises. Indeed, even a very modest process can be interesting as long as it is announced as such and as it does not masquerade as something bigger. Moreover, non-designers should be briefed that designers will remain in charge of the creative synthesis; and thus, each idea will be considered, carefully reflected about, sometimes aggregated with others but will seldom be part of the project "as is". Furthermore, designers should never speak about "participation" if they just want to hear citizens' view but have no intention of listening to them, because "participants" will inevitably find out their contribution has no weight.

Ethics

It is obvious that designers should respect the ethical guidelines ruling their profession. Even in the absence of a similar deontological framework for non-designers, they also have a responsibility to behave ethically. For instance, remuneration should never be the only reason for participants to engage in a participatory process. Moreover, citizens should be open-minded towards other people's ideas rather than showing a combative spirit that restricts the interactions. For their part, designers will not use the "*divide-and-conquer*" (I3) tactic. Participants can be divided into groups during the workshop for practical purposes, but organizers have to schedule a sharing time with the other participants so that

everybody is aware of what happened among all groups. Another form of manipulation to avoid is the organization of mock participation with the only intention being profit or to legitimize city officials' claims that citizens have been consulted while keeping the initial project intact. Therefore, designers should use their participatory skills with "*the ambition to serve values of justice, of democracy*" (I5).

Content of the participation

Designers and non-designers provide complementary expertise, but these are not interchangeable. Non-designers' ordinary knowledge is especially valuable for problematization while designers' professional knowledge is crucial when conducting creative synthesis. The project should therefore reflect both contributions and ideally result in tangible outcomes.

Project

Advocating for participatory processes in design does not mean that citizen participation substitutes design practice, nor that participants become designers. In fact, co-design cares more about defining objectives rather than results; determining a joint vision rather than drawing a precise design with hundred hands; listening to citizens' expectations and needs rather than defining the technical specifications (e.g. the number of square meters). In addition, "*rather than adopting a posture where the stakeholders will work on an object to be made*", co-designers "*first work to define (.) what will be the object of the design*" (I5).

Consequently, the problematization phase is not considered the sole prerogative of the designers. The initial issue statement is key since it will impact the objectives of participation and thus the following phases of the co-design process. The interviewees therefore suggested that citizens should participate as soon as this preliminary step, so as to co-identify the issue and set the shared agenda. The designers' responsibility is then to formulate the problem as a question or a "*topic that gets the attention*" (I1) and that motivates citizens to remain involved in the project.

Subsequently, the designer's role is to interpret the citizens' vision, to identify the points that generate consensus and to shape them into the design project. As stated by one of the interviewee, "*what is important for the architect is to keep the role of this creative synthesis because otherwise (.) if there is no clarification of the roles, the project might not be very consistent, very coherent*" (I2). In this configuration, professional expertise is clearly identified as essential, which should reassure some designers who sometimes fear for their profession when they think about citizen participation "*because they feel like their work will be done on their behalf*" (I2). The resulting design must be submitted to non-designers so that the project iteratively evolves towards a final solution and it slowly builds ownership among participants. Once again, the designers have to demonstrate some adaptability since they have to keep control over the design while making it flexible enough and adjust it considering the participants' input.

This creative synthesis also implies taking a step back to extract the essence of the non-designers' contributions. Indeed, participants often focus on very local particularities and daily problems without clearly identifying the core ideas behind their narrative. Designers therefore need to raise the participants' discourse to the "*upper level*" (I1) by clustering fairly similar elements and transforming various micro-level considerations into macro objectives. The responsibility of the designer is to transcend the debate and to echo the

participants' voice in a comprehensive and inclusive way, aiming for the greater good. Similarly, non-designers have to detach themselves from their individual interest and take a broader view on the collective issues. One of the participants' responsibilities is thus to listen to the other participants and to become aware that the project does not only affect their personal life but the whole community (even absent people who they should represent).

Impact

As mentioned before, citizen participation is not an end per se but is expected to have an impact by reaching (some of) the initial goals and giving rise to tangible results at the end of the process. The outcome can be an object, a recommendation or even a service, but the process has to produce something that is down-to-earth and community-based. Ensuring such a follow-up is essential to the project's sustainability and to the citizens' sustained interest. According to the interviewees, "*it is not participation for participation, but participation to reach a result*" (I3) in order to "*keep (.) the interest and (.) the sustainability (…) of this citizen mobilization in the long run*" (I1). Once the project is implemented, this responsibility is transferred to the citizens who will use the new infrastructure, or to the sponsors who will follow the recommendations issued by participants. Therefore, all the actors should contribute to the continuity of the project so that it does not fall into oblivion at the end of the design process.

Another condition of impactful participation is the stakeholders' (especially designers' and sponsors') confidence with regard to the participatory processes' added value. As citizen participation is more and more popular, the risk is that participation will be implemented only to ease some tensions, anticipate complaints, improve the image of the city, gain citizens' trust, respond to the participative imperative, ease one's conscience. There is no value in pretending to promote citizens' involvement while being uncertain that it will make a difference or even being sure that it will not.

When designers and sponsors advocate for participatory processes, it should echo with real engagement, the whole effort being pointless if there is no conviction that non-designers can create, innovate and truly shape the project. Indeed, "*a risk factor of the citizen involvement is (.) the extent to which the sponsor is involved him-/herself*" (I1) and "*the blockage here is rather the fact that the political body is not always convinced of the interest or is sometimes even convinced that it really has no interest*" (I2). Citizens should be given room to express their views and designers have to make room for adjustments arising from their participation. Consequently, the designers and the sponsors have the responsibility to embark upon a participatory process for the right reasons and only if they intend to do something concrete with it. A token process will only be a waste of time and energy; participation should never be an alibi but has to be considered an opportunity for everyone, even the sponsors. "*This induces (…) a lot of work upstream*", a change of mindset "*that is far from being achieved*" in our society (I2).

Valuation

Developing citizen participation benefits many people but requires the mobilization of good will. Participants are often volunteers and it is very important that designers value their input and recognize their involvement as actual work requiring specific expertise. The valorization of their contribution often takes the shape of a remuneration offered to the participants, who may either be paid or gain other advantages such as an access right to one place, service or event, the provision of a nursery, reimbursement for travel expenses,

food or small gifts. This compensation is included within the total budget of the participatory process, just like the designers' salary. However, the interviewees have addressed remuneration as just one possible gain for participants, among other things such as knowledge, awareness, empowerment, or intangible elements that could encourage people to participate again.

Without a proper valuation of participation by the designer, some segments of the population might not show up, which means that the non-designers participating would be confined to people who have the opportunity to give time, energy and money or are very interested in the topic. Particularly in the case of long processes, the participants' remuneration thus influences their representativeness and impacts their motivation. Indeed, "*at the beginning there is a lot of motivation and enthusiasm*" (I5), but at some point participants will give up because their initial curiosity is no longer sufficient to maintain their long-term commitment. The non-designers are also responsible for the valuation of the participation, because as participants they "*can become themselves ambassadors towards other inhabitants*" (I2). They can generate word of mouth and publicize the initiative, as well as the participatory methods they have tested, which might motivate more people to engage and disseminate the participatory spirit.

The outputs of the participatory process also have to be valued, otherwise the (non-) designers' involvement might be for naught. At the end of the process, results are expected to have at least some repercussions, such as users' changes of practice or implementations of new recommendations for instance. This question of "impact" has been further discussed previously, but designers and non-designers are both responsible for the tangible use that will be made of the participatory outputs.

Finally, the valuation also concerns the existing initiatives carried out by non-designers even before the start of the participatory process. Indeed, citizens sometimes identify problems and organize themselves to find solutions, which should be taken into consideration in order to inspire the participatory process. In this case, the professionals do not start with a blank page but as far as possible integrate, empower and/or support previous citizens' ideas into the new project. Obviously, the designers often rely on the sponsor to orient the participation towards a topic that has already been identified as relevant by citizens. Another way to value the participants' input is to grant them trust and enough freedom to act and to collaborate within a less rigid framework, which can be shaped collectively.

Participatory knowledge

Similarly to non-designers being not trained to design, the designers miss a deep understanding of local specificities. Participatory processes thus create opportunities for mutual learning and designers are expected to educate and empower participants. Originally called upon to participate as professional experts, designers are now also valued for their facilitation skills and become responsible both for the content and the format of design participatory processes.

Expertise

During the participatory process, the designer is considered an expert or resource at two levels. On the one hand, the designer holds professional design knowledge and skills as an architect, urban planner, heritage specialist, technician, researcher, designer etc. In this case, professionals pursue their usual business and take part to the participatory process

as designers. On the other hand, the designer may possess extra facilitation competences, which can be mobilized during the participatory process.

The designer's specialist role comes with responsibilities, such as reporting technical constraints that non-designers would not notice or assess as important to the design. Moreover, a professional designer engaging in a participatory process has to recognize that non-designers also have valuable expertise even though "*the non-professionals' knowledge is not the same*" (I2). Designers advocating for participatory design therefore accept that several forms of knowledge coexist without being tempted to direct the inputs and without fearing that such a knowledge might threaten their profession or minimize their experience. On the contrary, taking into account citizens' perceptions, feelings and needs will directly enrich their design. Furthermore, when the participatory process goes beyond exploration and when non-designers provide ideas and solutions, those should be supported by designers and materialized through design, whenever technically and financially feasible. As concerned local people, non-designers also play a role of experts, but rather in terms of living experience, local knowledge and usage of the built environment. They may also be very creative and innovative, but those are not mandatory qualities for the citizens, who are rather expected to share their day-to-day expertise and experience.

Learning

In order to carry out their role of designer-organizer-recruiter-facilitator-etc., the designers are expected to be trained. Even though architects and urban planners have traditionally been considered as champions of citizen participation, the interviewees highlight the fact that they are poorly prepared. Their educational curriculum is generally not sufficient to gain all the skills mobilized through one participatory process.

In addition, urban policies are nowadays almost inevitably associated with participatory obligations but remain pretty vague about "who" assumes this role and facilitates the group. In practice, this responsibility lies on the shoulders of the designers by default, because they usually acquire some experience through their academic and professional career while working in teams and managing projects. According to the interviewees, designers are better trained than they think, but are usually not aware that they indirectly learned to become facilitators, those latent skills being not clearly stated as an objective of their training.

Nevertheless, some designers are fully conscious of their ability and present themselves as "participation professionals". One would expect this posture to be supported by all interviewees, but one of them remains cautious and fears that those designers might rather envision citizen participation as a "*market potential*" (I5), for the sole purpose of making profit. In this case, the risk is to use a few participatory tools and "tricks" over and over again without adapting them to each peculiar participative context.

In addition to their personal training, designers are also expected to educate the participants to new topics so that they are empowered to take decisions and actions on their own. Among those topics, two of the interviewees assess sensitization of non-designers to design culture, esthetics, architecture, technology or citizenship (depending on the participatory goals) at least partly as designers' responsibility. Since designers also learn from the participants' lifestyles and from their purely bottom-up initiatives, mutual acculturation and learning are thus essential to create shared knowledge.

Facilitation

During the participatory process, designers assume the role of facilitators, which requires special skills. As explained in the previous section, those facilitation skills are not necessarily held by designers, who may sometimes be assisted by social scientists or social animators for instance.

The designers act as third party at two levels. First, they act as intermediates between the sponsors and the citizens who are sometimes suspicious towards public authorities. Second, they organize the debate and facilitate the relations between the participants so that "*everybody has the right to speak or at least is respected regarding his or her personality*" (I1). As facilitators, they have to fairly allocate speaking time between all the non-designers who remain free to take the floor or not. The designers thus are in charge of the group's dynamics, have the responsibility to balance participants' influence and to make the process as comfortable as possible for each of them. In addition, they have the responsibility to implement the participatory process in an environment as welcoming and as conducive as possible to the exchange of views and ideas.

Discussion

Our results highlight the amount and the diversity of roles and responsibilities involved in a participatory process. As observed in the previous section, most of them are assigned to the designers but the non-designers also have their part to play. Our results still show that the interviewees' discourses are rather focused on the designers (269 occurrences), compared to a lower proportion of their discourse focusing on non-designers (126 occurrences).

Although designers are more and more conscious that their role is changing and associated with new participatory responsibilities, those responsibilities remain frequently vague or implicit. Moreover, some responsibilities are shared but in an ambiguous way: "floating" between designers, non-designers and sponsors, without any of them clearly assuming them. For instance, one might argue that the non-designers' (sometimes poor) education to design rests within their purview, as their social responsibility (especially if design culture is considered as much general knowledge as music culture). Yet, at the same time, following the participatory mindset it is the designers' responsibility to upgrade and equate the non-designers' design knowledge so that all of them are in an equal footing.

Given this lack of clarity, designers are expected to assume a lot of key steps in the participatory process. Contrary to the popular belief that citizen participation endangers the design profession and diminishes designers' job, we are rather witnessing an amplification of their roles and responsibilities. Those roles and responsibilities might take different forms depending on the discipline of the "designer" of each participatory process. Out of the six interviews, the political field distinguishes itself from the other disciplines and promotes more formal and hierarchical participation. However, political participation is the best known and the most deeply rooted form of participation, because it arises from the 70's grassroots movements and relies on regulations. On the contrary, the participatory processes in urban planning, architecture, design, etc. are more informal and less constrained, even though the situation slowly evolves towards stricter frameworks (Bacqué and Gauthier 2011). Although initially well-intentioned, this prevalence of the

participatory obligation tends to encourage the instrumentalization of the citizen participation and paves the way for several excesses (Carrel 2013).

Indeed, the recurring imposition of a participatory dimension in design projects sometimes results in a form of quickly organized mock citizen participation with the sole purpose of fulfilling a requirement or "checking the box". Yet, as previously stated, the designers should be aware of their responsibility to commit to a participatory process only if they, together with the sponsors, are convinced that citizen participation will be organized for the right reasons and at the right moment. In case of doubt regarding the relevance of the project, the designers should refocus participation to give it the greatest possible impact (by changing the topic or choosing different methods for instance). In the most extreme cases such as dishonest policy makers, designers should even decline the contract rather than going down a dead-end and trying to control things that are out of their hands.

As far as non-designers are concerned, times have changed and public demonstrations arguing in favor of citizen participation are scarce. In fact, it has become a challenge to mobilize participants and recruitment becomes a crucial issue. In addition, non-designers sometimes experience the participatory process as passive actors, either because they (feel they) are only given a limited influence or because they are not yet conscious that they have more influence than they thought. We suggest that participants rarely realize the importance of their feedback, neglecting the fact that their participatory experience will affect other forthcoming processes. Rather used to political participation that often repeats frozen procedures, non-designers might have no clue that their participation does not only shape the content but also the format of further participatory stages. Another hypothesis we make is that citizen participation gives the impression of diminishing individual responsibility in favor of collective responsibility, which is then more impersonal and easier to ignore. Non-designers thus hold tremendous responsibility, prone to either endanger the whole participatory process, or on the contrary prone to precipitate its successful implementation and, thereby, prone to ease the outcome acceptability. In addition to this psychological pressure, participants also face very tangible pressures of time and budget that might deter them from getting involved.

Even though participatory and co-design processes give more and more recognition to the citizens' expertise, designers should not feel left behind in the process. While their roles and responsibilities may seem diluted and shared with non-designers at first sight, we argue that their role is actually increased. Those new roles and responsibilities may require some changes in practice and adaptations of design curricula, but are intrinsically linked to their "*designerly ways of knowing*" (Cross 1982) and thus create both professional challenges and opportunities.

Conclusion

Given all the roles and responsibilities explored through this paper, it is now clear that advocating for participatory design is not inconsequential, either for designers or non-designers. The participatory processes can be accomplished in a number of ways, and can cover a wide range of expectations. Thus, before promoting participation per se, each stakeholder should carefully reflect on and review what participation really requires.

We observe a shift between designers' and non-designers' roles and responsibilities, which should be clarified as soon as the planning of the participatory design process. This "planning" phase is associated with the setting of expectations and decisions making, that impact the whole participatory process. We argue that non-designers should therefore be involved from the start. This is rarely the case in practice, especially in top-down processes, because sponsors and designers first wish to define objectives and to choose methods before selecting the participants. We suggest they take the time to discuss all the terms of the "participatory contract", including the division of roles, with all stakeholders before proceeding with the next stages.

Some types of participatory processes may not be applicable, nor worth the effort, given specific contexts and projects. One should design the participatory process always keeping in mind that each step has to offer real added-value (to the stakeholders, to the situation, to the output) and has to translate into insights necessary for the project to unfold successfully. Advocates for participation should focus and shape their discourses and actions to favor an active, flexible, valued, representative, inclusive, relevant, impactful, respectful, motivating, transparent and ethical type of participation. Advocating for participation in design thus calls for a change in design practice, and a change in social responsibility.

Acknowledgement

This research is part of the "Wal-e-Cities" project, funded by the FEDER and the Walloon region. The authors would like to thank the funding authorities, as well as the six interviewees.

References

Aldiabat, Khaldoun, and Carol-Lynne Le Navenec. 2011. "Clarification of the Blurred Boundaries Between Grounded Theory and Ethnography: Differences and Similarities." *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry* 2 (3): 1–13.

Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35 (4): 216–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225

Bacqué, Marie-Hélène, and Mario Gauthier. 2011. "Participation, Urbanisme et Etudes Urbaines. Quatre Décennies de Débats et d'Expériences Depuis 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' de S. R. Arnstein" [Participation, Urban Planning and Urban Studies. Four Decades of Debates and Experiences Since 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' from S. R. Arnstein]. *Participations* 1 (1): 36–66. https://doi.org/10.3917/parti.001.0036

Bherer, Laurence, Mario Gauthier, and Louis Simard. 2017. *The Professionalization of Public Participation*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637983

Biau, Véronique, Michael Fenker, and Élise Macaire. 2013. "Les Métiers de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme à l'Épreuve de l'Implication des Habitants et des Usagers" [The Jobs of Architecture and Urban Planning to the Test of Inhabitants' and Users' Involvement]. In *Cahiers Ramau 6 L'Implication des Habitants dans la Fabrication de la Ville, métiers et pratiques en question* [The Inhabitants' Involvement in the Making of the City, Jobs and Practices into Question], edited by Véronique Biau, Michael Fenker and Élise Macaire, 11–28. Paris: Éditions de la Villette.

Björgvinsson, Erling, Pelle Ehn, and Per-Anders Hillgren. 2012. "Design Things and Design Thinking: Contemporary Participatory Design Challenges." *Design Issues* 28 (3): 101–116. https://doi.org/10.1162/desi_a_00165

Blomkamp, Emma. 2018. "The Promise of Co-Design for Public Policy." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 77 (4): 729–743. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12310

Carrel, Marion. "La Gouvernance est-elle Démocratique ? Les Enjeux de la Participation Citoyenne" [Is Governance Democratic? The Issues of Citizen Participation]. *Informations Sociales* 5 (179): 144–151. https://doi.org/10.3917/inso.179.0144

Cross, Nigel. 1982. "Designerly Ways of Knowing." *Design Studies* 3 (4): 221–227. https://doi.org/10.1016/0142-694x(82)90040-0

Fleischmann, Katja. 2015. "The Democratization of Design and Design Learning: How do we Educate the Next-Generation Designer." *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 08 (06): 101–108.

Fung, Archon. 2006. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance." *Public Administration Review* Special Issue (December): 66–75. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00667.x

Glass, James J. 1979. "Citizen Participation in Planning: The Relationship Between Objectives and Techniques." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45 (2): 180–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944367908976956

Gooch, Daniel, Annika Wolff, Gerd Kortuem, and Rebecca Borwn. 2015. "Reimagining the Role of Citizens in Smart City Projects." In *Adjunct Proceedings of the 2015 ACM International Joint Conference on Pervasive and Ubiquitous Computing and Proceedings of the 2015 ACM International Symposium on Wearable Computers,* 1587–1594. https://doi.org/10.1145/2800835.2801622

Guest, Greg, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson. 2005. "How Many Interviews Are Enough?" *Field Methods* 18 (1): 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x05279903

Hill, Jonathan. 2003. *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203327210

Jacquet, Vincent, and Ramon van de Does. 2018. "Should we Care About Small-scale Deliberation? A Systematic Literature Review of Minipublic Consequences." In *Conference proceedings of the Kongress der Deutschen Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft.*

Lee, Yanki. 2008. "Design Participation Tactics: the Challenges and New Roles for Designers in the Co-design Process." *CoDesign* 4 (1): 31–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/15710880701875613

Luck, Rachael. 2003. "Dialogue in Participatory Design." *Design Studies* 24 (6): 523–535. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0142-694x(03)00040-1

Luck, Rachael. 2018. "What is it that Makes Participation in Design Participatory Design?" *Design Studies* 59 (C): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2018.10.002

Macaire, Élise. 2009. "Des Architectes à l'Épreuve de la Participation" [Architects in the Test of Participation]. In *Ville Éphémère, Ville Durable. Nouveaux Usages, Nouveaux Pouvoirs* [Ephemeral City, Sustainable City. New Uses, New Powers], edited by Frédéric De Coninck and José Frédéric Deroubaix, 135–147. Paris: Éditions de l'œil d'Or.

Reymen, Isabelle, Kees Dorst, and Frido Smulders. 2009. "Co-Evolution in Design Practice." In *About: Designing. Analysing Design Meetings*, edited by Janet McDonnell and Peter Llyod, 67–82. London: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group.

Rowe, Gene, and Lynn J. Frewer. 2000. "Public Participation Methods: a Framework for Evaluation." *Science, Technology and Human Values* 25 (1): 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/016224390002500101

Sanders, Liz. 2008. "An Evolving Map of Design Practice and Design Research." *Interactions* 15 (6): 13–17. https://doi.org/10.1145/1409040.1409043

Sintomer, Yves. 2008. "Du Savoir d'Usage au Métier de Citoyen ? " [From Common Knowledge to Citizen Job?] *Raisons Politiques* [Political Reasons] 31 (3): 115–133. https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.031.0115

Steen, Marc. 2011. "Tensions in Human-Centered Design." *CoDesign* 7 (1): 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2011.563314

Zetlaoui-Léger, Jodelle. 2013. "Urbanisme Participatif" [Participatory Urban Planning]. In *Dictionnaire Critique et Interdisciplinaire de la Participation* [Critical and Interdisciplinary Dictionary of Participation]. Accessed May 7, 2020. https://www.dicopart.fr/fr/dico/urbanisme-participatif