

*Abstract (to be revised)*

*The developed world is rapidly transitioning from an industrialized economy to one powered by startups. This megatrend, referred to as the “startup movement”, harbours a sub-trend that evolves around design approaches and methodologies. Increasingly the strategy entrepreneurs use to manage their startups has embraced the process designers use to develop products and services. In that context, we notice a convergence of practices and processes based on two main domains: management/entrepreneurship and design. Since this convergence is happening naturally, the two processes initiate synergies. These synergies form complex systems and the processes within show multiple systemic characteristics. The main objective of this research was to explore those synergies through actual projects and case studies. Furthermore, to better document this design-led phenomenon, we devised, implemented and tested a novel educational program as well as a coaching program that would map and recreate these processes. This program serves as a laboratory aimed at better understanding the role and importance of design within the entrepreneurial process, by applying a design approach to a management process.*

*There is a profusion of research and publications on entrepreneurship and innovation, as they constitute disciplines in their own right. Nevertheless, these mainly originate from within the fields of management, marketing and small business. Literature addressing design-led entrepreneurship produced by design researchers remains scarce. Furthermore, besides the numerous private startup bootcamp initiatives, entrepreneurship is still mainly taught by business schools, leaving design on the sidelines (notorious exceptions granted). Observation and analysis of the multiple processes within the projects and case studies were conducted from the perspective of project disciplines and theory under two modes and knowledge domains: (1) the project and its « conception » - « design mode »; (2) the project and its development - « entrepreneurship mode ». These two modes invariably cohabit, but are based on fundamentally different paradigms (and mindframes), generating inconsistencies and sometimes confusion.*

*Team participants (entrepreneurs, students, mentors, speakers) come together, from a wide array of disciplines and industry sectors, in initiating new startups. We explore the consistencies and inconsistencies within their synergies by observing behaviors within a living laboratory, Startup Fuze (ULaval, Québec), a one-month, design-led intensive program, over a five-year period. Preliminary results show that within the development processes of « startups », design plays an important role for product development but its function as a strategic tool and methods are not well understood by the team. Interestingly, entrepreneurs follow an intense iteration process, especially in early stages of the startup, but there is little synchronization of tasks and strategies between the product-development and business-model processes. The « synchronicity » between the two processes is not optimal, nor does it seem to offer sufficient « anchor » points, both in practice and theory.*

*Keywords: Design-led Entrepreneurship, Startup, Design and Project Development Processes, Entrepreneurial Education.*