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Department of Design
Master's Degree in Product Service System Design

Understanding the role of product-service system designers within service design agencies in London

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Contents

Table of full interviews' transcripts

1. Abstract

Service design is a rapidly growing discipline applied by businesses and public sector entities to improve their service offering. The aim of the thesis is to contextualise the role of a product-service system designer in London's design agencies that provide service design consultancy within their offer.

The research aimed at understanding companies':

·   design typology
·   main area of work (private – public sectors)
·   variety of services offered
·   team structure: employees' roles and duties
·   product service system design's awareness
·   processes/tools adopted

To underline trends and predictions about the service design discipline and practice, a series of interviews to senior service designers and PSSD graduates have been carried out in London. The results of the research converged in a publicly available website.

2. Executive summary

2.1 Overview

Design is changing. The most prominent trend is that design is being recognised by businesses and organizations, and a whole new field is emerging. People often refer to it as service design, a holistic discipline that is core for the Product-Service System Design MSc.

The Polytechnic University of Milan's PSSD MSc *"is a two-year programme that aims at training a professional designer capable of conceiving innovative solutions, by integrating multiple products, services, spaces and communication artefacts into a consistent meaning and function.*

The design approach is interdisciplinary and provides participants with actionable knowledge in different design fields (from product to service, from space to interaction), an extended design toolkit, basics of project management, supply chain management, sustainability, anthropology and ethnography, communications and media." (Politecnico di milano, 2016)

2.2 Objectives

The aim of this research is to help clarifying what service design is today, what are the emerging trends and how to contribute to its development as a product-service system designer. This research has been conducted in London, where service design was born and is steadily evolving.

2.3 Methodology

To accomplish this task, a discrete quantity of interviews has been carried out in order to highlight and compare some of the industry most relevant personalities' different perspectives on the subject. The interviews have been supported by traditional bibliographic research and constant participation to dedicated events/conferences.

2.4 Conclusions

Some recurring topics emerged from interviews and desk research, in the making of this study: a conceptual map is provided for each topic, in order to help summarising results and explaining some of the most relevant trends.

The transcribed interviews have been published on a dynamic website that let users filter and quickly compare different opinions on the topics they are more interested in.

3. Introduction, premises and purposes

In the last five years many creative firms have been acquired by the most important consultant companies - Fjord by Accenture, Lunar by McKinsey among others - and similarly traditional design agencies have started providing a full range of strategic consultant services, which were previously uncovered. If designers have always been considered executors - and their work was needed at the end of business development processes, those data show a renewed interest by organizations to diffuse designers' approach, methods and sensibility within every part of their business.

This resulted in a need for companies to hire *hybrid specialists*, as professionals that have a solid background in a field and are able to apply their tools and processes in radically different situations. For instance, graphic designers' ability of generating new ideas is applied during new concepts development to allow a company to discover new business possibilities. At the same time, strategists use qualitative research techniques - commonly mastered by sociologists - in order to better understand characteristics and needs of customers.

"Service Design is the application of established design process and skills to the development of services. It is a creative and practical way to improve existing services and innovate new ones." (Livework, 2010)

The holistic approach of the constantly evolving service design discipline covers this gap and is being largely requested by businesses and public organizations. The demand is especially high in the United Kingdom, where the service industry covers almost the 80% of the global economy (Financial Times, 2016), and where the first pure service design agencies were founded, shaping this discipline over the years with the help of a strong community of practitioners.

3.1 Why this research?
As student of Product-Service System Design, I was extremely fascinated by the potentiality of applying this genuinely holistic view and the methodologies of service design and design thinking to problem solving. The multiple approaches and actionable tools taught in this course are just a small part of what I learned during the past two years; I wanted to explore the possibilities of applying all the knowledge acquired with PSSD to professional life.

However, one of the main limits I encountered throughout the course was the difficulty of explaining what a PSS designer does: colleagues and students from similar Master's degrees have frequently faced the same issue. Being among the first generation of designers who received a specific training in such an innovative and emerging field led to the necessity of clarifying what a product-service system designer actually is.

3.2 Why London?
As aforementioned, the third sector covers the largest portion of UK economy. London is a city where agencies specifically focused on service design were born, and many consider it the most influential city with respect to this particular discipline.

"A great example is the famous "stand on the right on the escalator" and "mind the gap" announcements on London Underground that increase safety and mobility in stations. Another London example is from the 2012 Olympics, where customers were educated about minor sports before events to help them be better-informed spectators and improve the atmosphere in the arena." (Reason, Løvlie & Melvin flu, 2016)

Design also radically contributes to the economy: the British Design Council (2016) recently reported an outstanding £71.2bn in gross value added (GVA) by the design economy during 2013, equivalent to 7.2% of total GVA. Moreover, *"the design economy is concentrated in London and, to a lesser extent, the South East of England. More than one in five design workers, and one in four design intensive firms (where 30% or more of the workforce were employed in design occupations), are found in London."*

The ecosystem has definitely helped service design evolving in the UK's capital city. Considering *CITIE City Initiatives for Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship 2015 Report*, London is one of the most innovative cities of the world, performing the highest score on openness to new ideas and new businesses and covering an outstanding second position on a global innovation world ranking, slightly behind New York.

4. Setting up

4.1 Selection criteria for service design agencies

According to the collaborative online worldmap, service design expertise is present in many design agencies; some of them are specifically focused on service design - such as Livework or Engine - while others offer it to clients beside other services - such as IDEO or Fjord; moreover, many non-for-profit organizations active in social design space use service design methodologies and are marked on the map.

In order to provide an extensive overview and to understand the different perspectives on the topic, the research included professionals with knowledge in both the private, public and non-for profit spaces, working freelance or within a company and with experience in 'pure service design,' digital or innovation design agencies.

Considering that only a very limited quantity of agencies describe themselves as only doing service design, while simultaneously almost any kind of creative agency – from branding to marketing or digital design – are increasingly moving towards the service design/design thinking area, it hasn't been possible to complete an exhaustive list of the firms that apply the methodology.

4.2 Events and meetings

As one of the aims of this research is to provide a 'snapshot' of what is happening to service design discipline and practice in London, attending several events related to the topic helped understanding emerging trends and gathering early feedback on the results of the research.

Given London's innovation environment, a large number of new digital ventures decide to work in co-working spaces, which contribute to keeping the community active by organizing talks and events. As part of a startup based at Google Campus' Tech Hub, my team attended various conferences on technology and entrepreneurship that helped highlighting the profound differences between the *lean* methodology, widely adopted among startups, and the design thinking process.

One of the most influential contemporary designers, John Maeda, presented his "Design in Tech report 2015" at Steelcase UK. Maeda, formerly President of Rhode Island School of Design, received broad consensus for showing clearly in both the 2015 and the 2016 versions of the "Design in Tech report" the latest development of design in technology and business areas.

IBM, the multinational technology company, is slowly reinventing itself as a leading design company, investing significant sums and hiring designers aiming to become a design-centred corporation. With the intent of promoting his efforts, has recently presented the new London's design department and uses the space to run occasional workshops – which provided several insights about large companies' approaches to design thinking.

London's service design community is steadily active in organizing meetups, which see the presence of experienced practitioners and people interested in knowing more about service design. Guests vary from companies' founders to freelance professionals so that each event offers a unique occasion to collect original perspectives on the subject.

4.3 ITV template

The selection and wording of question to be used during the interview marked a significant starting point for the research. The template has been slightly amended during the research accordingly to the specific background of the professionals that were going to be interviewed or to feedback gathered after the conversation.

General information: location and year of foundation

· **Which borough of London is your agency located in?**
  Do you see London as an innovative city? Why? Does the area you work in affect your work?
· **When has your agency been founded?**
  Did it get any recent change in its business? If not pure-service, when did it implemented service design?

Agency typology

· **Which kind of design agency is yours?**
  Pure service design? Not service design only? If not, who takes care about service design?

Area of work

· **In which sector does your company mainly work?**
  Private, public

Variety of services

· **Which kind of services are usually requested by your clients?**

Size

· **Where is your company located?**
· **How many people work in your company (London agency only)?**

Team structure: employees' roles and duties

· **How is your team composed**?
  Does it change depending on works' typology? If so, how? Is there any team lead?
· **What's the background of service designers in your company?**

Product-service system design awareness

· **Have you ever heard about product-service system design**?
  If Yes, how would you describe it? If not, which role of the existing ones in your agency better fits the academic definitions of PSSD?
· **How would you sketch a Venn diagram representing the relationship among service design, strategic design, PSSD and design thinking?**

Process and tools

· **Which kind of problem solving process does your company follow?**
  Which tools do you use?

Predictions

· **How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?**

5. Interviews

5.1 Overview on methodology

Due to the constantly evolving nature of the topic, this research followed an empiric process: as concepts overlap and people have different opinions on the subject, both the methodology and the expected outcome changed from what was originally planned.

If the expected output was initially a quantitative map that would show data from each design company – for instance, to compare the percentage of services required by their clients – it has become evident that the interviews wouldn't offer a clear line on the topics, because, for example, most of clients don't clearly know what kind of services they are requesting when they approach design consultancies.

In order to provide an extensive overview, the conversations covered distinctive selected subjects for the guest. As an example, since some of the interviewed professionals brought up the evident similarities between service and UX design practices, the following session included a specific question to ensure that the final report would propose a varied selection of perspectives.

5.2 List of people interviewed

> Marzia Aricò
Service Design & Strategy Consultant at Livework Rotterdam
20 Oct 2015

> Vincenzo di Maria
Cofounder at Commonground
26 Oct 2015

> Oonagh Comerford
Design Researcher and Project Manager at Design Council
29 Oct 2015

> James Moed
ex Portfolio Director, Financial Service Design at IDEO
4 Nov 2015

> Oli Shaw
Creative Director & Design Strategy | Group Design Director
at Fjord
9 Nov 2015

> Jenni Parker
Innovation Consultant at FutureGov, freelance Service Designer
16 Nov 2015

> Eva Kirchberger
DESMA Research Associate at Engine
17 Nov 2015

>Jonas Piet
Partner and Lead Service Designer at InWithForward
18 Nov 2015

> Marcella Maltese
Senior Experience Designer at Sapient Nitro
24 Nov 2015

> Jason Mesut
Founder at Resonant Design and Innovation Ltd
24 Nov 2015

> Chiara Cacciani
Product Manager at Facebook
25 Nov 2015

> Joel Bailey
Director at Livework UK, Founder at Strategic Design Resourcing
5 February 2016

> Dominic Burton
Service Designer at Livework UK
9 March 2016

6. Relevant trends

6.1 Service Design Background and Evolution

As society is rapidly evolving, design is constantly adapting to it and its contribution is progressively being recognized by leading organizations all over the world.

One of design's most recent changes is its evolution from being a craft discipline to one that also integrates new powerful ways for people to interact with the world and emphasize experiences. (Norman, 2016)

London, one of the top innovative cities globally, is the place where service design was born. The first service design consultancies - Livework and Engine – were founded in the British capital respectively in 2001 and 2003 and have steadily growing ever since – especially in the last two years.

The collaborative '*service design world map*' is being updated frequently: service design agencies are adding their geographical location while many design firms which have mostly done digital or global innovation - like Fjord or IDEO - are now on the map and are being associated to service design.

Large organizations, startups, financial companies, management consultancies, governments and non-for-profit organizations are understanding the value of design and hire service designers. Design is becoming influential at large scale as never before, but how did it happen?

Design consistently evolved to cope with the increased complexities of society.
During the industrial age, it used to be a craft-based field which knowledge would only be necessary during the executional phase to creatively ideate an aesthetically pleasant appearance for the mass production of objects and visual messages. Once new, complicated, and functional products became available, designers had to become familiar with the techniques of previously unrelated fields such as psychology or anthropology, and new theories and disciplines such as, for instance, ergonomics, helped addressing the emerging difficulties.

When complex products as computers and displays reached the mass audience, the introduction of "interaction design" alongside other new disciplines contrasted the problems of people dealing with those new devices.

Later on, by the 90s, the "*focus turned toward the design of services, whether in the offerings of businesses and corporations or in the services provided by governments and non-governmental social service agencies. Service design is perhaps the most commonly recognized form of the new interaction design.*" (Buchanan, 2015)

Services aren't physical objects and the methodology of service design developed from practices which differ from the traditional design: it actually originated in marketing and management and only later it did migrate to design. (Norman, 2016)

While the service sector gets closer to 80% of the global UK economy (Financial Times, 2016), macro trends in consumers' expectations suggest that customers now want brands to propose impeccable experiences from a flawless buying process to a competent and reliable customer service when they need support. Moreover, as a consequence of the accomplishment of entering in the digital area, every business is affected by the digital revolution thanks to previously unimaginable technologies that are shaping behaviours of consumers globally. Those three trends help understanding why service design is captivating the interest of more and more businesses and organizations. (Reason, Løvlie & Melvin flu, 2016)

As Muratovski (2015) notes,

 " The late twentieth and early twenty-first century has seen new economic developments that have altered the concentration of design capital, and subsequently the dynamics of the profession as well. The world was once divided into one part that designs (the West) and the other that manufactures (the East). Under the pressure of increased international competition, entire production systems were dismantled and outsourced to companies in Asia. (…) The loss of production capacity turned them into consumerist societies. In addition, the collapse of the American and European financial systems brought further into question the previous division of roles and labor.
Yet, at the same time, all of these changes have enabled design-led innovation to grow and evolve further. As a result, in the past decade, we have witnessed an increase in independent 'design thinking' consultancies, followed by a newfound interest in establishing corporate in-house design teams."

In the UK only, the design economy generated £71.7bn in gross value added and grew at a faster date that the UK average between 2009 and 2013. (Design Council, 2015)

Today businesses finally have tools and data to understand what IBM visionary founder Thomas J. Watson meant with "Good design is good business."
As an example, the Design Management Institute DMI Index reports an impressive 200% increased market value of stocks for the fifteen selected "design centric" companies (Apple, Coca-Cola, Ford, IBM among the others) compared to the general Standard & Poor's Index - over a ten-year period from 2003 to 2013. (Buchanan, 2015)

Large businesses are not the only ones who progressively understood the immense value of design: financial companies, management consultancies, venture capitalist firms, startups, governments and even non-for-profit organizations have now their own design teams as well.

Due to the management and marketing background of the service design discipline, the intangibility of services and the recent interest of corporates in regards to the business impacts of design, service design is often being associated with every form of modern multidisciplinary design that has an understanding of business – often referring to it as design thinking. As we will see, however, this is not necessary correct.

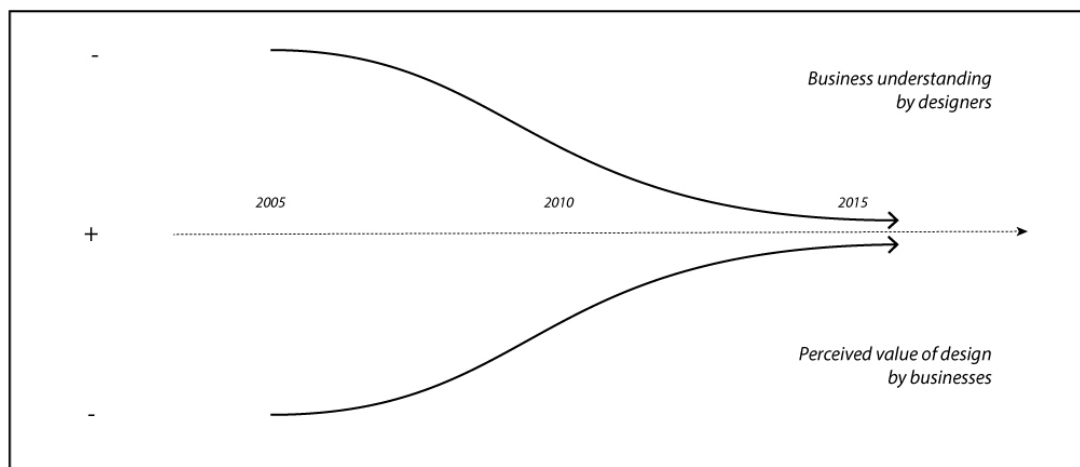*6.1.1 Interviews' results*

Figure 1: *Timeline: how did service design became what it is today*

Service design seems to have had an important contribution in its early days by the work done by the first pure service design agencies like Livework and Engine, the influence of social innovation organizations and the participation of an active community of practitioners.

However, the most relevant progress took place when the financial crisis forced most of the design consultancies to reinvent themselves, which lead to the need for a more competent conversation about the business implications of design.

On the other hand, the success of design driven companies like Apple alongside socio-economical factors, induced companies to investigate the importance of integrating design among other traditional business pillars.

OLI SHAW
"What I've seen in the last three/four years is that there is more and more need for business understanding - that doesn't actually mean that as a designer you need to have a full knowledge of business, but at least you have to understand the value that is there."

MARZIA ARICO'
"Service design is an extremely new discipline which emerged from interaction design. Today it is still facing many major changes.
Livework was initially mainly focusing on customer-experience, focusing on improving the quality of users and customers experience. One of the main limitations of that approach was an unbalanced focus towards the final user, while lacking to consider the complete system that delivers the service. Clients used to be corporates, with substantial budgets available from innovation departments. Projects were very "explorative", "future-oriented", aimed at understanding how to better anticipate customers' needs.

However, often those projects didn't get implemented. Big budgets, awesome projects - with an exceptional attention on the customer's experience - but difficult to implement – often because there were not sufficient capabilities in play or the business drivers were not solid enough.

In 2009, the big financial crack impacted heavily on Livework and similar agencies. Many employees – almost half of the workforce - had to be made redundant, mainly because their clients, the big corporates, had to cut innovation budgets. Those large investments didn't actually produce any business relevant results and agencies had to reinvent themselves in order to keep thriving and maintain their clients. During the same year, there has been a wave of publications related to design and its business relevance, such as Tim Brown's "Change by design", Frog's "A Fine line", Verganti's "Design driven innovation". It became quite clear that design alone was not enough to tackle the organizational challenges clients were faced with."

JAMES MOED
"When I first started working in design, it was a new exciting tool to solve business problems. It was really the first time that designers where asked to move away from "pure form" to thinking. Clients didn't even know what they were asking for: all they knew was "oh my god! You are talking to real people and you are prototyping things! That's magic!" It seemed like they were completely entranced by this method and I think that was the original time when IDEO built its application including a very human centred perspective, to solving problems.

So eight years later - many thanks to IDEO and the popularity of design thinking – design shifted from being an outsider way of thinking to being a core set of toolkit. So now those companies know what they don't know - but they are just very bad at it. They now know what a design approach to

business problems solving is, they've read enough books on how to do it and they've seen it done – but they don't really have the skills in house to do it."

MARCELLA MALTESE
"At Orange I was responsible for a R&D lab and had to deal with very different aspects, from concept development to rapid prototyping on different types of projects – interior design, websites, mobile and so on. The most interesting part is how I saw it all changing, from being a very tech-driven engineering hub to a very design-driven hub: during three years the design team got increasingly more relevant than the engineer team thanks to the results achieved by design-lead projects."

JASON MESUT
"I think (service design practice) is finally understanding that those projects take ages to be done and it requires a lot of patient and persistence. I still want to believe in this wider, holistic view, but I just think it's really hard to do it and it requires a lot more business appreciations and maturity.

However, I've seen more a few clients requesting it. And I've seen also some more recognition in the States where they were they were talking about it as "experience strategy" and design thinking. But it never really got hold as much as service design did, which is more a European focus. So it seems like the US is picking up on those things and as the US market does, they are very good in self-promotion and inflating the value and I guess we will see more of that."

6.2 Current models and practices

Global large companies like Apple, Nike, The Coca-Cola Company, IBM are increasingly promoting designers to executive roles showing an interest for design-led practices and approaches never seen before. This is also happening thanks to the designers' interest in management and their willingness to understand business and marketing concepts – and being able to communicate back in business terms the value brought by design.

Global companies are not alone in their interest towards design. Financial management businesses (e.g. Bloomberg, PwC, Deloitte, Accenture, BCG, McKinsey, Fidelity Investments, Capital One, Barclays, etc.) are either building in-house design teams or acquiring popular design firms (e.g. The Difference, Optimal Experience, Aqua Media, Fjord, Strategic & Creative, Lunar, Adaptive Path, etc.) (Muratovski, 2015). The trend does not seem to be going to stop anytime soon (Maeda, 2016).

However, many companies still rely on external consultancies when they need design services; with the aforementioned acquisitions clients can decide either to ask the support of business management consultancies - that have recently built the necessary design capabilities, or rely on independent design firms.

6.2.1 In-house versus consultancy model

As Muratovski (2015) points out :

"*Prior to the emergence of the digital era, many companies were dependent on print publications or TV to communicate their message to their clients The content needed quarterly development, or perhaps more commonly, once a year. This meant that there was no need for designers to be continuously employed by the company. Instead, they could be outsourced and contracted only when necessary. With the Internet dominating our lives, businesses have no choice but to communicate in real time with their stakeholders in a forum defined by ever-changing digital technologies. The rise of the corporate inhouse design team comes primarily out of this necessity Moreover, The growing trend for integrating design into overall corporate strategy, the need for confidentiality can no longer outsource what has become a truly strategic resource.*"

Both the in-house and the external consultancy models have pros and cons.

Dan Hill (2012) is quite critical regarding the impact of consultancy work:
"*The usual artefacts of consultancy – the research, the workshop, the reports- do not change the actors inside the organization. After the consultant leaves, the organization is left with the same people being asked to deliver the recommendations in a report written by people without a long-term interest in the organization.*"

On the other hand, when a company needs to create a proposal for a design strategy, recruiting an outside design consultancy can be beneficial if the company needs a fresh, impartial, objective perspective, free from political agendas and internal bureaucracy. (Best, 2006)

6.2.2 Startups

Startup businesses are also progressively affected by design. John Maeda's *Design In Tech 2016* (2016) reports an increment from 20% to 36% from 2015 to 2016 in top venture-backed startups that have designers among the co-founders and ventures like AirBnb or Uber are often referred to as examples of companies that respect good service design principles.

6.2.3 Government in the UK

As the public sector has grown, governments are exploring user-centred methodologies to improve and reorganize the welfare state and public services.
Interviews show that service designers are being hired by the UK government mainly by GDS, Government Digital Services, which is part of the Cabinet Office. Their current work is focused on the digital transformation of public services.

6.2.4 Interviews' results
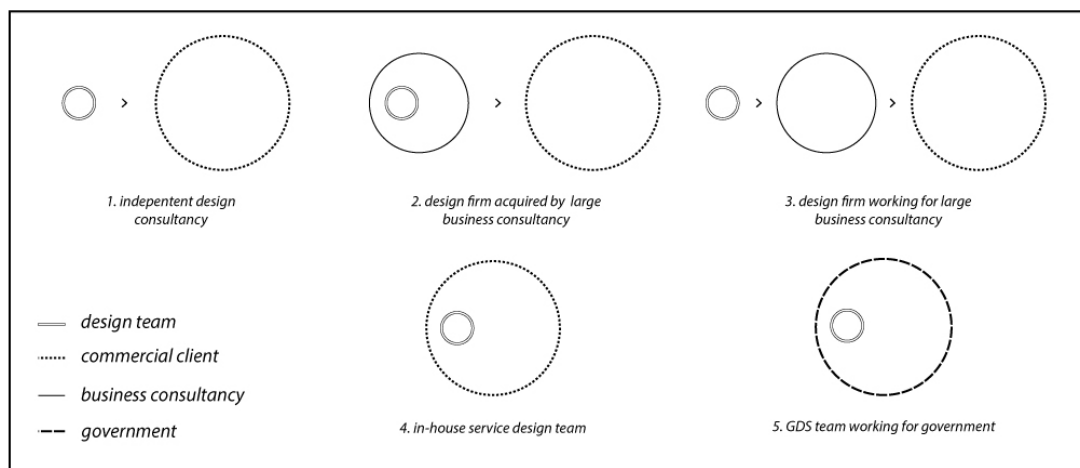
Figure 2: *Distribution of service design capabilities within the private and public sector in London*

Thanks to its constantly increasing popularity, companies are acquiring service design capabilities following different paths.

Some of them rely on independent design agencies – often for projects of limited size (1) – or ask for the support of large management consultant agencies which have recently added the right internal capabilities acquiring design firms (2). Sometimes management consultancies ask for external support for specific pieces of work and act as clients for small independent design agencies (3).

Other companies are building in-house design departments or integrating service designers in their teams (4). Similarly, most of the public work is carried out internally by the Government Digital Services department (5).

CHIARA CACCIANI
" *Companies are realising they can bring the service design work in-house and consultancies, as a consequence, need to create more tangible value.*

On the consultancy side one evolution I found very interesting was to restructure their team around three core areas: 1) business model and strategy 2) what they define as "service design" - which

consists in UX/UI work and 3) coding and building the MVP; as well as to have a venture approach – they would own/have shares in every product built, hence an interest in keep improving the product.

Big companies on the other end are applying service design skills more and more internally. Triggered by cost efficiency, they are trying to bring designers in-house building innovation departments that focus mainly on new product development."

EVA KIRCHBERG
"It seems like Engine has been responding to some requests from the market – service design is very trendy now and as we all know consultancies like McKinsey, Accenture, as well as digital firms are moving into this field. That causes a lot of pressure for Engine and also the clients' expectations change because they start to compare the offered services to what they get from other firms. As those firms are mostly from other disciplines and areas, it is a strange place for Engine to be in because there are some expected things they wouldn't necessarily have done.

On the other hand, it is also a huge opportunity because different expectations and needs make projects become bigger and they become comparable to the one which are typically done by management consultancies. So there's this kind of frenemy situation: the management consultancy is kind of the enemy because they pitch for the same jobs, but at the same time they can be clients."

JASON MESUT
"I think there are increasingly more consultancies buying user experience/digital studios. And they want to do more of the bigger system-thinking: when they don't just have UX people, they use some of their business analysts to understand cultural changes - I talk about the Deloitte, Accenture, EY, buying the agencies to try get into that space. And they're the better places to actually do those complex pieces of work because of the relationships they have with the legacy software and with very senior stakeholders

The real challenge with them is that you have the small design thing at the top - which is almost leading the sexy sell and often doesn't get bought in the project - and the reason they want that is that there's a whole source of systems implementation and support that follows: millions of pounds, years of contracts that follows those ideas. The difficulty is that, if you are in the design part, you can't recommend something that doesn't mean you are going to get all of that later value for the onsell. This is why I do believe in a sort of level of independence as well, where you want to go when you want some sort of independent advice: the thing is that, as a company, I might just want a little bit of work that is cheaper – and that's it. So I think there's a role for independent agencies as well."

MARZIA ARICO'
"A number of multinational companies are investing in hiring service designers to build the capabilities internally. I found these companies extremely interesting – what will this investment generate? They differ from other companies that use service design as a way to promote themselves through a shining appearance: those companies are actually changing from the inside, with some potential interesting outputs that will start becoming visible within the next 5 years."

OLI SHAW
"Fjord has been acquired by Accenture two years ago: I believe what changed is the scale of the problems and the abilities to create more impact - which are both bigger. I've also worked in other agencies - big and small, before Fjord - and one of the challenges has always been having the right access to the right level within an organization to create impact. At Fjord we've got a 15 years of relationship with some of those clients - so if you need to go and see the CEO of the corporate company you're working for, Accenture gives you the ability, for instance, to explain how important

that specific part of the project will be – or equally the CEO might come to us in case he needs help framing a specific unknown problem.

The split that I've been looking at more is within Ad agencies, - like AKQA, Wieden + Kennedy - that are moving more towards what service design is doing. This is happening both among traditional "Above The Line" agencies and branding agencies as well like McCollins. They Recently hired a couple of good people doing more of experience design: they were saying that by doing brand strategy they also do the service that goes into that. And then you have digital agencies and service design agencies like Fjord, IDEO and RDA and they are all combining into this area. There are also consulting companies; more and more of them are buying design agencies. So Fjord used to be in the previous group but is now in the "consulting" group

In the UK, the GDS (Government Digital Services) team "swallowed up" a lot of good service designers, and they work within the public sector: only a few agencies do government work. At Fjord we have done some public work but it would be only a 5% compared to a 95% of private clients. The reason why it is that high, is because the Digital Government Services probably had quite a hard line."

JOEL BAILEY
"Within the private sector the demand is fragmented. There are a couple of main areas: financial services are a big buyer at the moment – even if I'm not sure they are using it pretty well; then I think any commodified service provider – and by that I mean a service provider who cannot compete on products, like gas or electricity companies where prices are heavily regulated. They use service design to differentiate. There are quite a few people that run product businesses that want to become service businesses and retain relationships with their clients. You also have agencies – brand, marketing, digital particularly – are trying to diversify through service design because their clients are asking for it. This is all within the private sector.

Public sector is really interesting – I spent one year of my career working around local governments – and it has become pretty much about GDS – government digital services. I believe they still talk about service design and try to follow service design principles but I think they are still pretty much about creating web content whereas I believe there is a very huge opportunity in multichannel service design to redesigning the proposition of governments. For instance, someone could probably do a very good job in reimagining how to do business rates or how you transact when buying a home: several things that needs to be reinvented just from a regulator point of view."

6.3 Team roles and duties

As seen before, design is becoming even more multidisciplinary. Service design is a recent discipline and specific courses have only been implemented in the last few years; consequently, the large majority of practitioners come from very different fields: innovation management, anthropology and research, traditional design practice.

This, summed to the misleading overlap of service design with design thinking / human centred design, leads to an unclear definition of what service designers actually do. Job titles in leading design agencies continuously change: interaction, experience, strategic and service designer seem to be interchangeable names for role, which are not easily defined.

The only role which seems to have autonomy is the *business designer* which is often referred to when talking about business professionals with a knowledge of business model, channel strategy, marketing, supply chain (etc.) and have practiced consultancy following a human centred approach.

Livework – one of the few "pure service design" agencies – explains in the recent book *Service Design for Businesses* (Reason, Løvlie & Melvin Flu, 2016) the key concepts, methods and tools followed by its teams and tries to set a standard for practitioners. Prior to this publication, only a very few books set the basis for a shared view on a large scale – *This is service design thinking* by Marc Stickdorn & Jakob Schneider and Tim Brown's *Change by Design* among the most popular.

The second misunderstanding about the role of service designers is related to the strategic management early contribution to shaping the discipline. Despite the obvious implications on business of a carefully designed service, it does not necessary mean that a service designer should have the same knowledge or responsibilities of someone who holds the position of design manager: not all the service designers have a deep understanding of traditional business.

6.3.1 Design manager
As a job description, the design manager has the role of managing design. The important aspects of managing design, irrespective of the job title, are about understanding the strategic goals of an organization and how design can play a part, and effectively putting in place the ways and means the tools and methods, the teams and planning requirements and the passion and enthusiasm, to achieve these goals as successful outcomes. (Best, 2006)
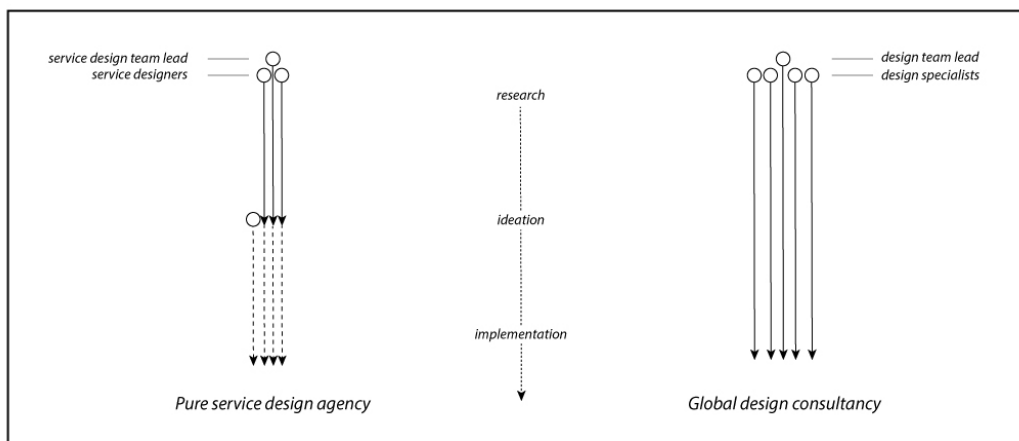
6.3.2 Interviews' results

Figure 3: *Hybrids vs specialists – complexity and scale of the problem*

Service design relies on a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to problem solving. Design firms generally encourage this hybridization process, but according to the agency typology, teams are formed either by service designers, which have multiple skills, or by specialists for each discipline - e.g. researchers, strategists, visual designers.

There is a correlation between the size and complexity of the work and the agency typology: boutique service design consultancies tend to work on smaller projects and focus more on research and ideation, while more complex projects are more often managed by larger design firms which also take care of the implementation.

Due to the holistic nature of service design, the majority of today's service designers are senior professionals in their fields which believed on a wider system-thinking and learned on various levels methods and skills pertinent to other disciplines. Most of the people interviewed therefore appeared quite sceptical regarding the possibility for junior professionals to hold service design positions.

DOMINIC BURTON
"I think some companies do divide things down to specific roles, but we tend to take the approach where we have small project teams and the team will stay with the project for the entire duration. We would start with the research, then continue with the ideation, the prototyping and the entire thing. And it seems to work well. We have quite content - intense projects and a lot of knowledge would need to be transferred when working on team with specific activities and roles. But I can see how it might make sense to divide more if you are a bigger company.

We rarely ever deliver a functioning website, while I think a UX designer would be expected to work with developers and actually produce this website. I think at the beginning Livework did that a lot more - probably some service design company still do that, while we usually have partners and we take care about the service strategy."

JOEL BAILEY
"I think it's useful to have different things at different stages in the process. Generally, at Livework, everybody is a holistic service designer and everybody therefore does research, does design and creates material. Maye once you get into the creation phase you need to bring in an interaction designer, or a UX or a product designer. At the moment we are working on a agile project, which is divided in sprints: there's an interaction designer which is contracting, helping us coding a prototype so we can put it in the field to test it - and he's working remotely. Those roles don't necessarily need to be part of the core team. It depends by which stage you are working on and what the client is asking for. Increasingly they want to see what is being built while you do the design work. I like that approach but I just think it brings in a slightly different shaped thing."

EVA KIRCHBERG
"It depends by the size of the project. If it's a small project there are two people involved in it from the beginning to the end: the role of the service designer at Engine is very generalist, so people can actually do everything – from doing research to ideating concepts or doing workshops. They sometimes even go to the client side and help them implementing. I don't say this might be the future's structure but it is how it currently works. When it's a complex project such as the latest in Dubai – we are talking about a two-years engagement – then it's a bigger team of about 5 members and you can also find more hybrid skills. That team is composed by a change manager, a graphic designer, a product designer, someone coming more from a digital background. So it's more varied."

MARCELLA MALTESE
"The creative group – composed by more than 100 people in our office – is formed by developers, copyrighters, visual, interaction and UX designers. For each of those domains there's an internal organization. For any new project – according to the problem to be solved - people get selected from the various domains and they form a team.

The project I'm working on at the moment, for instance, is very unusual: our client doesn't have an in-house team of designers, hence my team is constantly working for them and alongside them in this on-going partnership. The team is composed by two UX-ers, two interaction designers and a project manager. And since apps are live and they are being constantly improved it is an ongoing project, the length of each stream could vary a lot."

OONAGH COMERFORD
"A chief design officer, a behavioural scientist, a service designer with a psychology background, a graphic designer. We also had a strategist in the past. It changes accordingly to the project. We had some people with specific expertise – for example industrial design – but who take a program/project management approach."

JONAS PIET
"We recruit people according to the role that we need in that specific time. So we initially recruited a designer, a senior manager and a community worker from one of the organisations we've partnered with; we hire people sometimes on temporary roles - we've worked with documentary film makers, writers, learning specialists and professors. And I think roughly 1/3 of them are designers: a bunch of people with a science background, some with a business administration background. We're often interested in people that have a very specific content background. So that's the point of difference I guess between us and an IDEO or an Engine. For us it's important to have people with a content knowledge in the team and we often try to build the capacity in the organisation. So we have these people that might spend half a year with us and be really part of our team - and it's interesting because at the same time they don't need to be in our payroll as we might not have the resources to hire them directly, so we "borrow" them from the organisation we're partnering with. Sometimes we even hire end-users as well."

OLI SHAW
"I've been building teams and hiring people for the last 8 years. I always try to find people that are "hybrids". So they can do interaction, visual, research or whatever it might be. Sometimes it's because of the individuals themselves, sometimes the hybridization happens because of the environment they are working in: some environments don't want hybrids, they want people to fill a box - other environments stretch people too far.

So when putting a team together there's always a lead, a visual design component, an interaction, there could be a creative technology component, a business design component. There could be only 3 people or up to 4 - 5 and sometimes there's a need to add even additional components - but there always needs to be a core team that solves the problem - and I blend the skills accordingly to solve it. At a certain point there's someone that needs to visualise something, to present a flow, or to put an excel behind the business decisions, but up until that point I encourage all the team members to get involved. Technology people to sketch wireframes as much as visual designers, interaction design people to understand business numbers behind the specific stream and so on."

CHIARA CACCIANI
"I find the skill set required to be a successful PM at Facebook very similar to the main traits of a successful service designer.

In both cases you're part of a team and your job is to define what the problem/user need is and how to solve for it. Of course you'll never be alone but you'll work on it with your team.

The value the PM adds is the ability to understand and speak different languages, define priorities and coordinate the execution. You'll have vertical experts across Design, Engineering, Research and Data Analytics who will help you understand what the most impactful thing you can build is, but relies on you to:

1) Define what next steps are to understand the problem/opportunity (Are we looking into data? Are we running a on-field research? Maybe hacking a quick solution and testing it?)

2) Define priorities to execute against the plan effectively

3) Coordinate the work across discipline in the team (design-research-engineering) and with other teams when there is an area of overlap or simply you'll be touching their code.

This multidisciplinary aspect is the fun part of the job as well as what it makes it so similar to service design, because you'll find yourself sometimes playing the researcher role sometimes the graphic designer one and so on."

JAMES MOED
"It's not that they're not looking for juniors, but the danger with service design is that they are often good thinkers but not good enough at anyone part of what it takes to build the service! I don't even know if it's possible to be a junior service designer. Service design is the combination of different design disciplines to solve a complex problem that involves a combination of people and digital interactions and spaces and so on, right? So in some ways a service designer is just a designer who is good at working with other disciplines to solve a complex problem. What you find at a junior level sometimes is people who aren't really good enough at business, they don't understand business quite enough to be able to drive meaningful business decisions: they don't have enough reputation or even the right set of skills and at the same time they are not even great formal designers!

Their work is "ok", maybe they can or actually even worse they can't actually make anything and so you might say "hey let's build a prototype" and they are like "well I can draw a service journey... we can put on some post-it".. At a junior level to be able to frame and think you have to be very, very good in creative to be worth-it."

6.4 Disciplines overlapping

Design thinking and service design are in high demand. However, the partial overlapping of the two terms could create misunderstandings.

6.4.1 Design thinking

Current discussions of "design thinking" give ambiguous interpretations. The popularity of the phrase reflects the recent re-evaluation of designers as individuals capable of thinking and decision making besides doing and making.

Buchannan (2015) states that

"In one meaning, "design thinking" refers to an Imaginative Act of the Mind. It is the designer's act of imagination in seeing a new possibility and working to make that possibility a concrete reality.
In a second meaning, "design thinking" refers to Cognitive Processes of the Brain of the Designer. This means how the human brain gathers, stores, and processes information and then how we make decisions about what can and cannot be created and how the creation may proceed in synthesis.
In another meaning, "design thinking" refers to a Spirit of Creativity and Value that may permeate an entire organization or, indeed, an entire culture
Finally, "design thinking" sometimes refers to Creative Inquiry, the discipline and practice of an intellectual and practical art: asking and answering central questions about the purpose, form, materials and efficient production of a desired result to reach a specified outcome."

Stefanie di Russo, (2012) defining a brief history of design thinking, says that it "*was a realization through the evolution of different (collaborative) design process methods that were developed to improve and extend design to other areas of practice.*" She outlines how it all started with 1960's participatory design that later evolved into user-centred design thanks to the well-known design theorist Don Norman. Showing the differences between the two design methodologies, she also introduces service design as a further discipline that emerged from established traditions including product, environment, experience and interaction design. Human-centred design – often used as interchangeable term for user-centred design – in the late 90's shifted from being a techno-driven design method, to a humanized set of tools until "philosophically" becoming a mind-set, as a human-centred approach to design.

However, "design thinking" is today considered by some critics a slogan mainly reused by the leading design innovation company IDEO for marketing purposes.

6.4.2 Service design

There still seems not to be a shared common definition for service design either.

In *This is service design thinking* (2012) Stickdorn & Schneider open the *definitions* chapter comparing different academic perspectives from leading organizations with:

"If you would ask ten people what service design is, you would end up with eleven different answers – at least.
Service design is an interdisciplinary approach that combines different methods and tools from various disciplines. It is a new way of thinking as opposed to a new stand-alone academic discipline. Service design is an evolving approach, this is particularly apparent in the fact that, as yet, there is no common definition or clearly articulated language of service design."

However, in Livework's latest book, Reason, Løvlie & Melvin Flu (2016) refer to service design as a discipline which adopts the design thinking approach.

Considering the first as a design discipline, which has its own methodologies and tools and the second an approach and a process to problem solving, both influenced by each other and sharing many principles,

could help clarifying the overlap of the two concepts.

For instance, a business person that uses ethnographic research tools of service design doesn't necessary mean that he's following a design thinking approach as much as a product designer could be a great design thinker and not being confident with a service blueprint map.

A further clarification might be needed if we consider the definition that states that "*Service Design is an emerging field focused on the creation of well thought through experiences using a combination of intangible and tangible mediums*" (Livework, 2010)

Products and services have their own, formal characteristics but they both share the functional properties. As an example, let's consider a car sharing service and a bike.

They both have their own qualities: the car sharing service is accessible during weekdays and cars can be driven for a maximum of 50km, while the *vintage looking* bike is made of steel and weights 6kg. The functionality of both is transportation.

They both "*use a combination of intangible and tangible mediums to create a well thought experience.*" If the car sharing mobile app isn't working we won't be able to reach our destination just as much as if the road on which we intend to ride our bike is too rough or if we brake a component and there's no customer service to help us substitute it. Our experience will just not happen.

Therefore, when considering the design of an experience we are actually considering the product-service system in which it happens. If we set the driving limits to 80km instead of 50km or we use carbon for the frame of our bike, we are either way designing a specific service or a product property. However, both the changes will affect the final experience.

If we look at the experience holistically, from a service perspective, we consider all the touchpoints – included the physical ones – which the user will interact with; if we look at it from a product perspective we will look at the enablers, included the intangible ones, for the experience to happen. This combination of intangible and tangible mediums is the system.

In the competitive world of today where products and services are strictly connected, a product designer needs to have a wider "*system*" view just as much as a service designer should.

Part of this "*big picture*" approach of service design derives directly from the interaction design heritage; on the other hand, the craft-design roots of traditional design have not required - until today such a holistic competence.

6.4.3 Product-service system design
As aforementioned, a more appropriate definition of service design seems to be design for product-service systems.

The literature on the topic offers different academic definitions for PSS, from either a marketing or a product management perspective, but they both refer to "*a marketable set of products and services capable of jointly fulfilling a user's need*". (Goedkoop et al, 1999)

Don Norman (2016), when talking about design education, is quite critical of traditional design courses, since they are only focused on craft skills, instead of requiring a wider system view which involves social or scientific competences.

"The field of Industrial Design helps industry produce commercial products. In schools and universities across the world, considerable time is spent on mastering the craft skills of drawing, construction, materials, manufacturing, and finishing. Indeed, in many schools, there is little time spent outside of these crafts: little time on social issues, philosophy, world events, or general literature. Little or no training in the fundamental STEM components of Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics.

Do the traditional design courses help? The closest would be courses in service design, but traditional service design treats much simpler problems than those of complex systems such as healthcare."

The Polytechnic University of Milan offers a Master's degree in Product Service System Design, which includes elements of design thinking, service design, innovation management, industrial and communication design in a holistic, system perspective. The course description suggest that also *"leadership, self-entrepreneurship and pro-activity in the society"* (Politecnico di Milano, 2016) are core characteristics of a product service system designer.

6.4.4 Interviews' results
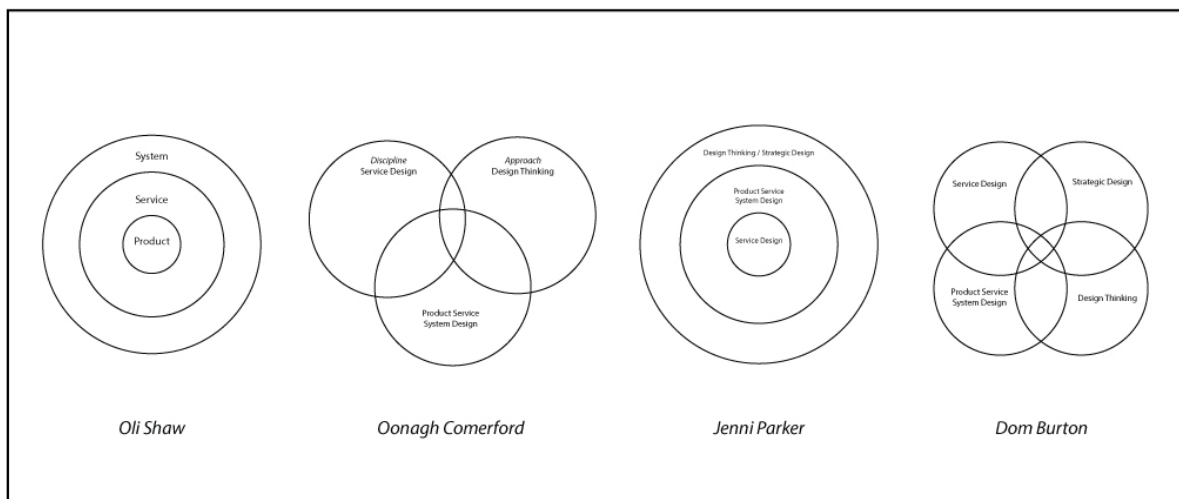
Figure 4: *Different perspectives on disciplines overlaps*

The strong influence of practitioners' background still contributes to shape the evolution of service design. As boundaries between digital and physical progressively blur, the differences between similar or overlapping disciplines become less clear.

Despite theoretical perspectives, in ordinary practice "service design", "design thinking", "strategic design", "product service system design" appear to be only different names given to the same approach.

> *JAMES MOED*
> *It's all design thinking. Using design methods to solve problems. Within that, service design is specifically looking at designing complex services. Services composed by different touchpoints that require different design disciplines. So it's how to design them in an integrated way and which one to use, when. Should this involve more people, more screens, more space? It means deciding how to draw the levers.*
>
> *I don't even know what that strategic design means. Maybe it is the application of design thinking specifically to solve business problems: using design tools in terms of framing, structuring and strategizing without going as far as making things. But that's a bit fuzzy.. Design without any making is a little bit weak.*
>
> DOM BURTON
> *"Strategic design and service design are quite related and they definitely partially overlap. I believe LiveWork is located in this "intersection". I think you could do service design focusing more on how*

you realise the service and environment: service design would mean focusing more on the implementation and less on the strategic - which is what strategic design is about in my opinion.

PSS is obviously product and service related. You probably are doing something similar to service design whereas sometimes you might be focused more on the product and sometimes more on the service.. And then you have design thinking, which seems to be in a way becoming less popular all the time: I think it's just a way of thinking - and sort of selling design to business. There's probably a bit of design thinking in all of them.

I think there are probably different types of UX designers and probably, unfairly, UX and UI got lumped together in one thing, hence UX has started to be focused on digital solutions only. If you think about a balance, a centre of gravity, UX is probably closer towards implementation or building stuff while we rarely get to the stage of building a website or what an actual user is going to see. We are much on a higher upstream, which is about the strategy, user needs and so forth. We rarely ever deliver a functioning website, while I think a UX designer would be expected to work with developers and actually produce this website. I think at the beginning Livework did that a lot more - probably some service design company still do that, while we usually have partners and we take care about the service strategy."

JASON MESUT

"Digital services are exactly what user experience people have been doing! Just because UX has become predominantly about digital, it doesn't mean you don't have to deal with all those system levers. It is funny that those days there's still a separation! I mean both practices are meant to be human centered in some ways and yes, service design tries to look at a broader canvas, but user experience has become this small thing focused on the user interface side. I believe it is just unfortunate because good user experience people are not that at all. But, to be honest, in user experience there's more roles, there's more money to be paid, it's more tangible what can be done with it."

MARZIA ARICO'
"In my opinion design thinking is an attitude, that any designer has. It is not a set of tools or a methodology. It doesn't mean more than that, it is just a word, adopted by IDEO and used for marketing purposes. Design thinking is what subtends any kind of design action – being, industrial, interaction and so on."

JOEL BAILEY

"To me it's all applying design to service businesses. That's the topline view I have. Service businesses make the large bulk economy these days and that's an important thing to focus on."

MARCELLA MALTESE
"That is what I think is happening to service design in general: it feels like it is being diluted in business consulting. A designer knows why he wants to build a prototype, knows what he wants to test and knows that playing and getting his hands dirty enables the possibility to come up with new solutions. This is something a business consultant doesn't have, and that's why I'm conscious that many call themselves service designers today, but the design and craftsmanship aspect of this work is getting lost."

6.5 Ethics – social and environmental aspects

As aforementioned, the role of designer is changing and shifting from "*doer*" and "*maker*" to "*decision maker*"; large organizations are promoting designers to managerial roles and governments are hiring service designers to facilitate the digital transformation or help finding solutions to local issues.

Another important trend that testify the change of western society is related to consumption models. As customers are getting more and more aware about the implications of production and distribution of the goods they consume, many people are now trying to contribute to a more sustainable world through ethically correct consumption.

Leading brands are responding to this demand in different ways, demonstrating sensibility towards the topics. Some examples include:

- Supermarkets that have extended their range of products, introducing and promoting organic food
- Apple presented a recycling service for used products carried out by an automated robot
- Barilla has recently decided to avoid the use of palm oil in many of its biscuits

The rise of shared economy and service economy is another factor that testify a change in the behavior of the consumers, who are more and more interested in sustainable alternatives.

Designers are key mediators in this process:

" *The role of design in our lives is to create the environments within which human intent can move forward in interaction, forming human meaning in the reach toward satisfaction and fulfillment of the original intent. The environment may be an artifact that we employ in daily life. It may be a clear communication and sharing of information. It may be a service or other planned activity in which we are engaged for pleasure or practical purposes. And it may be an organization or a system that is designed to fulfill one or another human purpose"* (Buchanan, 2015)

Buchanan is not the only one who underlines the role and responsibilities of designers as decision makers. Don Norman (2016) divides the role of design as a craft from the new design as a philosophical approach as well:

"The traditional role of design as a craft, creates beauty and pleasure in our lives, using the ever increasing powers of technology to create wonderful experiences. The other, that of design thinking, becomes a method of thought and discovery, approaching the major issues of the world with new eyes, addressing the fundamental root causes, not the symptoms, but always with primary focus and attention to the people: human-centered design. No more should the focus be on economic productivity, on monetary measures. Instead, the new design philosophy with its focus upon people puts the long-term health and happiness of people as the major item of concern, which also means addressing the major issues of our time: health, famine, environment, inequity, and education.

One of the key concepts which are at the core of those reasoning is the necessity for long-term interventions which unfortunately are opposed with the emerging findings in neurosciences about how humans prefer short-term decision making (Hill, 2012). The systemic redesign of cultures of decision-making at individual and institution levels, particularly as applied to the primary problems of the 21th century requires time. As the scale of the problems gets bigger, the time required for the culture to change - and for the solution to have impact - increases. Part of the issue in implementing those long-term decisions is that *"strategic design solutions may not be "traceable" enough to validate the sales pitch of external consultancy."* (Hill, 2012)

As seen before, design is acknowledging the importance of business, and business is understanding the economic values coming from embracing design – either employing more designers, implementing a design thinking department, or following a design driven innovation approach – and there are tools and studies that help proving it.

However, profit should not be the ultimate goal of organizations: *" In recent decades there has been a tendency to regard profit as the purpose and goal of all types of organizations, including hospitals, universities, and other organizations that we may not immediately see in terms of profit and loss. This is a distortion of the nature of organizations recognized even in the early decades of the twentieth century."* (Buchanan, 2015) Just as countries ranking indexes are including positive lifestyle contributions - including prosperity, equality, health and wellbeing as key factors for establishing which are the best nations in the world, (OECD, 2016) *"the purpose of an organization is to provide goods and services in society. Profit and economic gain is best understood as a necessary element to sustain the organization and strengthen its ability to innovate in changing circumstances".* (Buchanan, 2015)

Dan Hill, in his volume named *Dark matter and Trojan horses - a strategic design vocabulary* (2012), gives an extensive overview on the topic and introduces the concept of strategic design as a global discipline that applies the principles of traditional design to "big picture" systemic challenges:

"The difference between traditional design and strategic design is that strategic design recognizes that the "dark matter" is part of the design challenge. (…) A particular BMW car is the outcome of the corporate culture, the legislative framework it works within, the business models it creates, the wider cultural habits it senses and shapes, the trade relationships, logistic and supply network that resource it, the particular design philosophies that underspin its performance and possibilities, the path dependencies in the history of northern Europe and so on. That is all dark matter; the car is the matter it produces.

The dark matter of strategic designers is organizational culture, policy environments, market mechanism, legislation, finance models, incentives, governance structures, tradition and habits, local culture and national identity, the habitats, situations and events that decisions are produced within."

Every artifact produced by designers is influenced and influences the environment in which it exists. The responsibility for every designer, whatever position considered – graphic design, design manager or design lead - is to be able to understand the role of the produced artifacts in the environment and viceversa.

Buchannan (2015), describing the design movement in management, readapts the words of the famous designer George Nelson in his article *Worlds in the making: design, management, and the reform of organizational culture*:

"At a meeting in the House of Commons in 1943, Winston Churchill famously remarked, "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." In light of Nelson's observation, we might say it slightly differently: we shape our organizations, and then our organizations shape us. Put simply, the challenge for design is how to influence organizations not only to affect the thinking and behavior of individuals, but also to have a $positive$ effect on human experience in an increasingly complex world."

The strategic resource of design in our society can be expressed by designers in every position, from the leading role of an organization designer to executional ones.

Dan Hill (2012) is rather critical about the concept of design thinking expressed by Tim Brown as it states that *"Change by Design" – despite being a good book – is too easily led into the arena of commercial management consultancy practice rather than the conditions of social contracts. There is nothing wrong with that, except that it promises a discussion of a new social contract and doesn't necessary deliver one,*

but it does leave a space for a different kind of strategic design addressing governance, public life, the civic sector."

A junior industrial designer, part of a bigger team, will hardly have any word in discussion that involve the mentioned topics. However, having received a new, holistic design education and adopting a design thinking approach he'd be questioning himself about the implication of preferring a recyclable material to a not-so-sustainable plastic, for example. Of course, when this junior industrial designer will be promoted to a leading position (strategic designer), his role will involve more responsibilities; following the same design thinking principles he will need to be aware about all the "dark matter" elements described by Dan Hill, question himself, and design carefully the strategy with his team.

The ethical implication of modern design, whether referring to it as strategic design or design thinking are deeply linked to a Socratic procedure of maieutic self-questioning and approach the problem from a holistic, systematic perspective.

6.5.1 Interviews' results

charity following design methodologies
working on social innovation project

design firms working mainly on commercial work and
carrying out social innovation project aside

design firms including social/environ-
mental reccommendations on
commercial work projects

— design team
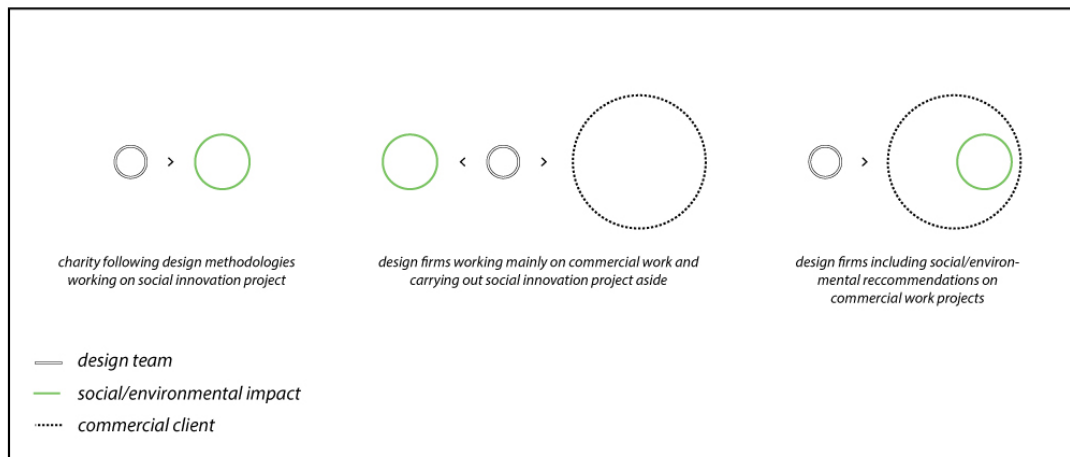— social/environmental impact
······ commercial client

Figure 5: *social/environmental sensibility in design agencies*

As the sensibility for ethically correct consumption steadily grows, specially among younger generations, the role of designers in organization and society is changing. Designers are becoming decision makers.

What's emerging from the interviews is the shared vision of pursuing socially and environmentally sustainable strategies that need to be looked at as investment which will reveal their values – including economic benefits – only on a long term period.

Some organizations, predominantly not-for-profit enterprises that use service design methods, focus on working in the "social innovation" space only; design agencies instead tend to carry out some social innovation projects beside their main commercial activities or give social/environmental recommendations to their clients within their work.

OLI SHAW
"Designers of my teams often tell me that they want to impact life of the people they are designing for: how do you know you've been impacting their life? You need to be able to measure it: in order to measure it you need to start getting into what I call business design - which is kind of the numbers behind the graphics, the interactions and the experiences.

We do quite a few social innovation projects; but another way of looking at social/environmental impact is using service and system design skills: we try to make sure we make things "delighting" customers doing economically sustainable business. But then we try to integrate social/environmental recommendations - and if we do it right we should be able to make customers happy, do business with a positive impact and also do things on a ethically sustainable level. If you look at this kind of matrix around customer happiness, technical feasibility and business impact - you can easily add in a fourth in your prioritisation and it's just a case of balancing those levers."

JOEL BAILEY
"A good designer could put the skills to either challenge: some part of the social design work – the canvas you are working on is longer term and probably more strategic, because more intangible has lot of indirect benefits. "How can we make an impact in this quarter or in this business cycle?" in social design is "how can we reduce this problem in the next three years?" hence it's quite similar.

You often need to have a longer view with commercial work, but the way social policy works, tends to be about convincing the regulator or some philanthropic organizations to invest in a change that takes a lot longer and is more difficult"

JASON MESUT
"Social innovation is interesting. I had a few problems with social innovation: when I used to really dislike service design it was because it was full of people saying "oh we're going to cure world hunger". It was so ethically skewed that it didn't make any sense. I mean, I care about the people and the world where we all live in, but I'm a designer and my mission is not about making the world a better place. I'm being paid by a client that needs to have some results. You need to make sure the client is happy, understanding the market, the needs of people and designing better systems and solutions. But when it comes to users' needs versus business values, then I'll focus on business value. I have to prioritize that: that's me as a designer. I'm not doing exactly what they say but what I do is about giving them something more which goes beyond – and that's the consultancy part. I'm not an artist, I'm not self-expressing. There's too much design and activism going on and it goes against the professionalism that clients need from us.

Too many people spend their time in this difficult area. As noble as it is - it's just not easily translatable in the commercial world. But for what I look at, all this commercial work can create social impact. Sometimes the social impact is greater, even if less measurable, within that commercial work, rather than in some "design a community" project. For instance, the companies that are being criticized because of selling cars, well I believe that without their contribution our cities would be different, our shops would be different. I know there are bad parts that today got to a point where it is all almost unmanageable, but overall I believe is mostly being positive, through connecting people together."

DOM BURTON
"I think there are two types of social innovation approaches. The one taken into account by the public sector - which is quite strong at the moment - and the more "pure" social innovation – which is the space where charities and social enterprises work. There's been quite a lot of service design focus in that areas – including a few companies that unfortunately don't exist anymore like Participle or ThinkPublic. I think it is difficult to get funding, specially when there are not many investments around and people are focusing more on delivering standard services rather than trying to innovate. But I think a lot of people do want to work in that area, it's quite popular. Livework would be interested in that area, there are just not too many projects. And there's a lot of public-sector work around it anyway.

One thing somebody told me some years ago about social innovation that I believed changed a bit my view was related to how you could make a valuable contribution even doing commercial. Contributing to the middle class is important and actually creates positive impact. And that was quite a different perspective to me."

VINCENZO DI MARIA
"I've recently worked on a project for a large shopping centre in the south of Italy, owned by a multinational corporate, that is actually interested in implementing a recycling scheme and reduce its waste production. Looking at organic waste and compost production a new educational garden was designed outside the shopping mall. The project was in partnership with SlowFood and delivers educational workshops to school kids who would come to the commercial centre to learn about conscious consumption and sustainability. We design the signage and the educational materials together with some design students of the University of Naples. Those are the kind of projects, funded by private corporates, which end up having a real impact on the areas they are located in. I believe those are the solutions we want to look for."

JENNI PARKER
"I think there's a lot of opportunities in the social innovation space: I haven't been working for any big corporate clients but I could say I've never had any "income" problems – there's a misconception that if you want to work in those "sustainable" projects you'll end up being poor: I get paid well for doing social innovation work. I think you just need to have the confidence to go for it, spreading the word, going to the client and explaining what you are doing - because they are not looking for you. That's why I've been freelancing for so long. I had to talk a lot to people to explain what I was doing. I believe, whatever is your interest, being it public sector or charities or whatever, it's all about just going out and exposing yourself."

OONAGH COMERFORD
"! I've always been working on social issues, never worked for a client or for a project which is just for commercial purposes. If you think about all of those agencies, for some of them the balance is more towards social aspects but the majority work for commercial reasons and they try to do a bit of both, so working for corporate clients and then do some social related projects on the side.

It appears that more roles are coming up in councils delivering services for people and I think there are roles for social design within those spaces. There are people that I know who are opposed to going to work for "a large car manufacturer" for example, because they are genuinely interested only in those social innovation projects."

JONAS PIET
"We don't call the people we work with "clients", our relationship is quite different. We work a lot in partnerships. This means that at the moment we're equally partner alongside the three largest disability service providers in Canada - but having said that we think that whatever we do, our work is about system change and that must involve public sector organizations.

So, to give an example, at the moment in Vancouver we've been hardworking heavily with the ministry of community living as well. We don't see them as clients. They are an important actor in the system because most of the money on the sector is obviously public money. So in order to create something that has any sort of bigger impact you need to also change something in the system - hence involving public sector organisation. So we don't call them clients and we wouldn't start there."

6.6 Predictions on the future of service design

The possible future evolvements of service design are intrinsically linked to what will happen to the whole field of design.

As Muratovski (2015) concludes: *"The emergence of design as a strategic resource for business and social innovation has all the hallmarks of a megatrend. As with any megatrend, it is characterized by enormous social, economic, political, environmental, and technological change that is slow to emerge, but once in place, has the potential to influence a wide range of activities, processes and perceptions, both in government and society, and possibly for decades to come."*

Considering specifically the public sector, the vision for the UK's GDS is to fully integrate service design within governmental policymaking procedures:

"Policy making will be service design, and service design will be making policy. Ideas and implementation will be much closer together. In fact, there won't be any new ideas without some sort of implementation. Thinking in code. Iterating in public. The result will be services that shape government, not the other way around. There will be smaller administrative centres, and a new culture based on evidence-based decision making and trust between teams.

By 2030 - before that, long before that in fact - we will have fixed the basics. We won't have to be constantly encouraging people to put users first, or to work in an agile way, to iterate – all these things will be the default, the new normal. This is probably the most fundamental of those basics. By 2030, we won't talk about digital because everything will be digital. I'm not claiming that we'll have reached the magical, mythical paperless society. I don't think that will ever happen, to be honest." (Foreshew-Cain, 2016)

As reported, the role of designers is expected to change and related responsibilities will be different as well.

In regards to the future leading positions of design in management, Buchannan, quoting Senge, writes: *"The essence of the new role [of leaders], I believe, will be what we might call manager as researcher and designer. What does she or he research? Understanding the organization as a system and understanding the internal and external forces driving change. What does she or he design? The learning processes whereby managers throughout the organization come to understand these trends and forces."*

Designers are not only expected to cover leading positions in government or organizations. The role of the designer as a facilitator of co-designing process is expressed by multiple design theorists (Buchannan, Manzini), which explain the necessity of distinguishing the professionality of trained designers to the regular design activities of non-trained people.

"Also, as concepts such as design thinking are increasingly gaining acceptance at all levels in business and society, we will see an increasing number of people calling themselves "designers" even though they might never have studied design. The increased popularity design thinking has brought to the entire field has been valuable so far, but this might also start working against the field, if more and more people (misleadingly) believe that they do not need any qualifications or proper training to "think" like designers—as many design thinking workshops imply. The danger here is that the credibility of the design profession could be negatively affected in the long term." (Muratovski, 2016)

Dan Hill (2012), criticizing the widespread diffusion of design thinking as it "not only misrepresents the value of professional design but misleads on the promise of everyday design", uses a very simple example to describe how a design thinking mind-set does necessarily come from a hard design practice:

"Proponents of design thinking rarely suggest that design practice might involve say, sitting and drawing a shape or object hundreds upon hundreds of times."

As organizations are understanding the value of design and designers are getting managerial positions, a young discipline as service design risks to gets simply diluted into a set of tools – among others – in the skillset of traditional business management. Service design is not a bunch of qualitative methods that analytical thinkers learn and use at their discretion alongside classic analytical methods.
A similar development of the discipline would have nothing to do with design. Buchannan (2015), quoting Tom Peters, underlines the deep human roots of "Design mindfulness":

"Machines can automate a lot of things, but design is something humans do best. It's part of the way you play around with things—part of the relentless experimentation. You falter, you get back up, and eventually you figure things out. That's the design process. 'Design mindfulness' has got to be in everything you do—down to the littlest thing. Even the language you use in e-mails. There's a character to communications. There's a character to business. It's how you live in the world."

Design and service design will have the possibility to produce real impact on society as never before. It is now up to designers to accept the challenge and take the responsibilities that derive from it.

6.6.1 Interviews' results
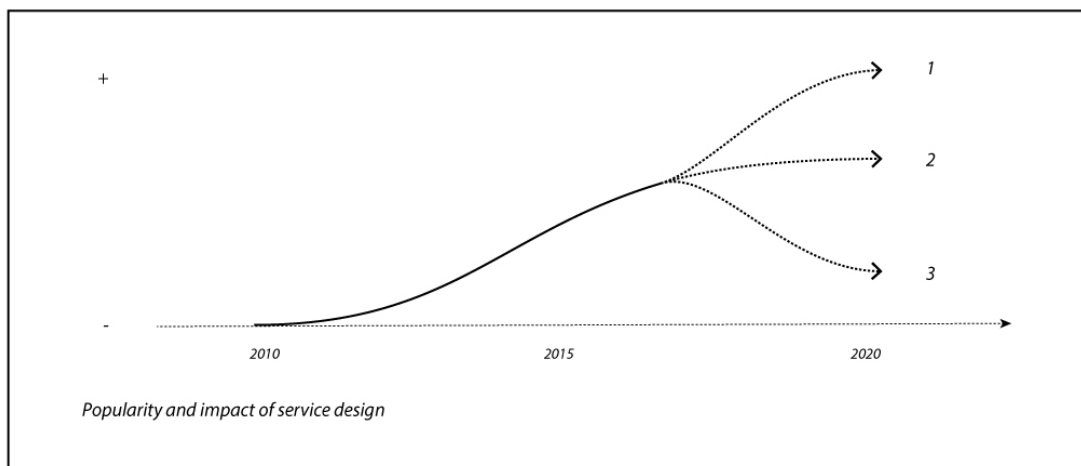
Figure 6: *Possible future scenarios for service design*

As service design popularity keeps rising, it becomes evident there are many possible threats that come with it. From its methods being absorbed by commercial marketing to not being able to live up with its expectations, the multiple natural risks embedded in becoming an autonomous discipline can't show precisely what will happen to the future of service design (3).

If its popularity will stabilize and practitioners will be able to provide tangible results, the discipline will likely be able to form specifically trained professionals and become a solid and distinguished component of business (2).

The aspired scenarios sees service design being able to both satisfy business requirement - addressing users' needs and at the same time to make a positive impact on society (1).

JAMES MOED

"So if you want to have an extension to where service design is going, you know that a lot of design agencies are being bought up and I think what we're finding is that design thinking and the role of design solving skill is becoming another standard pillar of the business toolkit.

What I find interesting is where will pure design thinking agencies go in the next many years. McKinsey has a design group, Bain has a design group, companies are building their design groups in-house. Those groups don't just do design thinking: they use design in the context of all the other parts of the business. Which is always the weakness of design innovation companies, because they are good big thinkers but they are not really good at financial modelling or technology planning: for all those other pieces they have somehow to borrow skills or to make assumptions. So now that design has become one of the five key business skill set, what is left for design innovation agencies to do? Will they actually start going back to do more formal design? Leaving more of the strategy to the business consultancies?"

JONAS PIET
"I personally can't take people seriously if they just present some design research or a bunch of interesting ideas and not showing me something that's been actually implemented within an organisation. I wonder if those services are still alive after 2 or 5 years: what happened to them?

There are many different people interested in moving into this field of service design - which is very different from what it used to be around 15 years ago when the very first ones coined the name and started their agencies. They developed a definition, a practice around service design and when I see people bringing in different backgrounds I can see things changing. So it's interesting to understand what people say service design is and what is not. Those people seem quite successful in attracting clients and establishing business relationships that last a year or two. But what will that lead to?"

JOEL BAILEY

"It's very hard to know what will happen in the future! I think we might go through a period where there's going to be a lot of bad design contaminating the service design practice.

You have different ways of working, different cultures and practises bashing up against each other: the management consultancies way of work has its own culture and a totally different view about where value comes from compared to a service design perspective which is much more user centric, iterative and generally more agile. That's going to take ages to settle – hopefully good design will prevail getting through this upcycle, avoiding trust despondencies because it has liven up to its hopes. So I'm hopeful we'll get through that and we'll get to the other side: there are good and bad aspects but at least we now have realistic expectations. My fear though is that we end up going down the road of system thinking as a method to trust to do everything and I don't think that's true at all.

EVA KIRCHBERG

"I think there are different possible scenarios and we cannot predict which one will become reality. It depends by the different firms behaviours and by the market as a whole. I think that quality is important: clients might be satisfied by service design results or they might decide it's just a trend that don't really deliver on his promise. So I think there's a bit of a risk there.

Those are the possible scenarios I've outlined: Option A could be we will have more companies re-labelling themselves as service design agencies and increasingly doing service design, claiming less they are doing digital, which will just be absorbed by service design as a whole.

Option B is that digital design will actually own service design and everything we understand related to service design will automatically be implied when talking about digital design.

Option C: the label become useless as everyone does something different and clients don't really understand what it actually is hence service design will still be done, not as a distinct practice but as other disciplines absorb its tools. So it could be that consumer marketing uses the user journey mapping to do what they do and people talk less and less about service design. I don't think there's a risk for it to disappear – it might just become less demanded.

The opportunity is that if service design steps up more, projects can become bigger and service design companies could partner more with management consulting agencies to work on huge customer experience projects. So, we will see."

7. Conclusions

Design has always evolved to simplify an increasingly complicated world. Service design helps simplifying ours.
Understanding how design theories and disciplines have evolved in relation to major changes of culture and society helped framing the contemporary developments happening in many design fields. As the economy of the United Kingdom is largely founded on the secondary sector, the emerging service design field helps organization creating and improving services that ensure customers and citizens satisfaction.

Good design is good business: companies are understanding the real value behind the sentence and there finally are data that prove it.
Designers have struggled for decades to convince enterprises that investing in design would have been beneficial in terms of profits. The recent publication of reports on the subject and the openness towards design by leading global companies now offer valid arguments on the matter.

The financial crisis accelerated the design's innovation process as both design agencies and organizations had to reinvent themselves to keep thriving.
After the tremendous impact of 2008's crisis on global economy, many design consultancies found themselves struggling to obtain new jobs as their clients' budgets got cut significantly. Most of those clients were businesses that had to find newer ways to surmount the competition and they started to explore design as agent of innovation.

Modern forms of design are rapidly being integrated in global companies, management consultancies, startups, governments.
The wide acceptance of design as a valuable element is testified by many research that report examples of successful integration of designers on every levels of organizations, from managerial roles in leading corporates (Apple, Nike, IBM, etc.), to acquisition of relevant design firms by the most important large consultancies (Accenture or McKinsey). It is also reported a rapid increment of top VC-funded startups that have designers co-founders and large number of service designers being hired by the PA to improve public services and governmental reorganization.

Companies' don't fully understand modern design yet and tend to consider service designers/design thinkers as professionals with a knowledge in both business and design fields.
Given the recent developments of service design and the popularity of design thinking as an ambiguous concept whose application would impact business positively, companies don't have a precise idea of what the practical role of service design is, but generally tend to refer to it as an area equally shared by design theory and business management.

Since service design is a relatively young discipline, the large majority of practitioners are too senior to have undergone specific training.
Most of the educational programmes on service design have been developed in the last few years and, considered the ambiguity of the subject, most of the current service designers are senior professionals that have approached design problems following a holistic, system-view collaborative attitude and have found themselves doing service design-like work before it became popular.

Design thinking and service design are NOT interchangeable concepts. Design thinking is an approach, service design is a discipline.
Highlighting the differences between service design and design thinking could be beneficial in order to clarify what those two concepts actually are. After comparing the different definitions for the two terms and the meaning that people give to both, it seems appropriate to consider service design as a discipline - that follows specific methodologies and uses tools (e.g. the blueprint canvas to map user journeys) which

are not necessarily used in design thinking – that is considered a much broader and more ambiguous approach, instead. However, both the concepts share multiple principles and influence each other.

Modern design requires a holistic approach as products need services and vice versa to solve a user need.
As differences between tangible and intangible mediums increasingly blur, thanks to the arrival of the digital era, services and products become inseparable entities that need to be considered from a system-view perspective in order for a designer to address the right design problem.

As designers are becoming decision makers, they are aware of the impact they can have on society and the responsibilities that comes from it.
Macro-trends suggest a shift towards ethically-correct consumption and designers are finally holding relevant positions: the contribution they can make is tangible and they are aware of the significantly increasing responsibilities.

Service design recent popularity can be both beneficial and dangerous to the further development of the discipline
As challenges become more and more complicated, service design could evolve towards significantly different directions, from not being able to live up with its expectations to getting recognised widely as a powerful discipline and produce impact on society on a large scale.
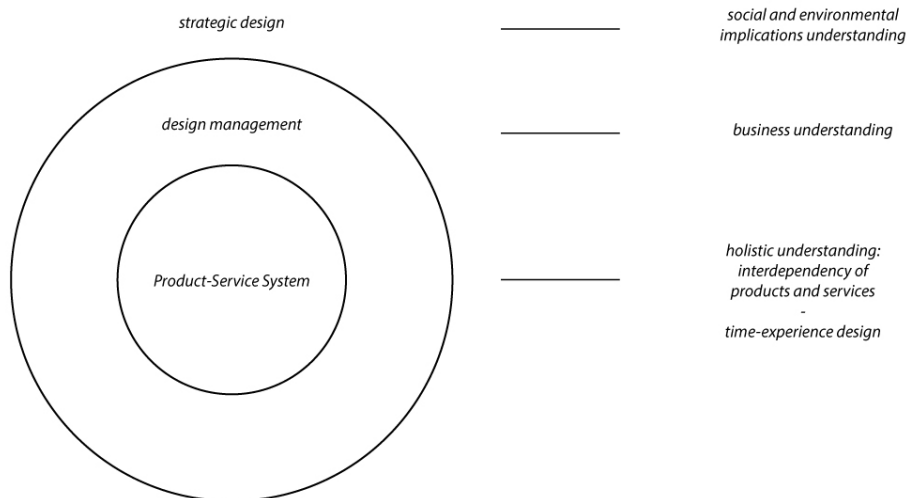
Figure 7: *Different levels of designers' understanding and responsibilities*

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Full interviews' transcripts

Marzia Aricò
Service Design and Strategy Consultant @ Livework Rotterdam
20 Oct 2015

Where is Livework located? How does London ecosystem influence the service design discipline?

Livework's headquarter is in London.
London is a truly interesting city in respect to service design. It is the city where many service design agencies were born. I'm referring to agencies that are solely focused on service design, like Livework or Engine. Today there are a number of other design agencies heavily investing in service design like DesignIt or IDEO. London is by far the most interesting city regarding the "design of services".

When was Livework founded? Did you see any recent change in its business?

Livework was founded in 2002 and today has offices in London, Oslo, Rotterdam (where I am currently based), Sao Paolo, and Beirut.

Service design is an extremely new discipline which emerged from interaction design. Today it is still facing many major changes.
Livework was initially mainly focusing on customer-experience, focusing on improving the quality of users and customers experience. One of the main limitations of that approach was an unbalanced focus towards the final user, while lacking to consider the complete system that delivers the service. Clients used to be corporates, with substantial budgets available from innovation departments. Projects were very "explorative", "future-oriented", aimed at understanding how to better anticipate customers' needs.

However, often those projects didn't get implemented. Big budgets, awesome projects - with an exceptional attention on the customer's experience - but difficult to implement – often because there were not sufficient capabilities in play or the business drivers were not solid enough.

In 2009, the big financial crack impacted heavily on Livework and similar agencies. Many employees – almost half of the workforce - had to be made redundant, mainly because their clients, the big corporates, had to cut innovation budgets. Those large investments didn't actually produce any business relevant results and agencies had to reinvent themselves in order to keep thriving and maintain their clients. During the same year, there has been a wave of publications related to design and its business relevance, such as Tim Brown's "Change by design", Frog's "A Fine line", Verganti's "Design driven innovation". It became quite clear that design alone was not enough to tackle the organizational challenges clients were faced with.

Livework partnered in 2011 with Melvin Brand Flu, an experienced business professional who was quite new to the design world - with a background in econometrics and business management. With the help of Melvin Livework invested into a better understanding of how to improve the service design offering. As a result they came up with the concept of "Service Design on Steroids" which combines service design with service transformation. The starting point is still the customer but service design on steroids builds on two additional pillars: business drivers and organizational capabilities. These extra two pillars require a profound understanding of the capabilities of the client organization and its way of operating. In the intersection between customer, business, and organization, the role of the Business Designer has emerged. Today almost any project at Livework has both a service design and a business design component.

How would you describe which kind of agency is Livework?

Livework's website states: "we design services for customers that impact on businesses". So Livework designs services that make sense for customers, and leverage business drivers and organizational capabilities.

Which kind of clients does your company work more for?

I'd say that 70% of our work is in the private sector while the remaining is public or third sector.

Which kind of services are usually requested by your clients?

Generally, clients don't know exactly what they want or at least struggle to articulate it. Digital or cross-channel are hot topics.

How many people work in your company (London agency only)?

About 20 people.

What's the role of members of the team?

We don't have many different roles. In Rotterdam we have service designers and business designers. Depending on how big a project is, the team changes. We start from a minimum of 1-2 service designers that, most of the times, are paired with a business designer. Usually there's a project leader – most of the times an account manager - and the work always involves a close cooperation with the client organization.

What's the background of service designers that work with you?

There are a couple of people coming from Innovation Management, a couple from Strategic Product Design, some interaction designers and a few graphic designers.

Have you ever heard about Product Service System Design?

I have never come across a "product service system designer", it's quite an academic jargon.

I remember an article about "service dominant logic" (2004) which argues that products don't exist: they are simply mechanism of service provision. Hence separating products from services doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

In my opinion design thinking is an attitude, that any designer has. It is not a set of tools or a methodology. It doesn't mean more than that, it is just a word, adopted by IDEO and used for marketing purposes. Design thinking is what subtends any kind of design action – being, industrial, interaction and so on.

How do you differentiate service design from customer experience?

Service design is a practice, which involves a method, a process and specific tools. Customer experience is the "ultimate goal" or object under analysis.

How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?

I think it will be interesting to see what the recent acquisitions - Designit by Wipro, Fjord by Accenture- will lead to. There are just a few serious agencies that have remained independent. I believe service design will keep moving towards increased business relevance – a lot has been achieved but still a lot needs to be done. It has become some sort of buzzword – everyone seems to be talking about it, claiming they are doing service design.

I believe it's still not yet clear what are the business challenges that require a service design approach - and which don't - and consequently what should be service design's role in business. There's even another

interesting discussion which is the role of service design within the public sector: the latest Service Design Network conference, that took place in New York, was exclusively related to the topic.

Moreover, a number of multinational companies are investing in hiring service designers to build the capabilities internally. I found these companies extremely interesting – what will this investment generate? They differ from other companies that use service design as a way to promote themselves through a shining appearance: those companies are actually changing from the inside, with some potential interesting outputs that will start becoming visible within the next 5 years.

I'm conducting a PhD research on the added value of service design for business. I've recently read a research from Daniela Sangiorgi that states that on average 50% of service design projects do not get implemented. Hence, I'm very curious to understand what's the real impact of service design and how we can effectively measure its impact.

Vincenzo Di Maria
Cofounder @ Commonground
26 Oct 2015

What's your background?

I'm a design practitioner delivering training sessions in different European universities, part of the Service Innovation Academy programme and Service Design master's degree at Milan Poli.Design. I am also the President of Architecta, the Italian Society for Information Architecture.

I started my design career at Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC), an innovation unit of Central Saint Martins, part of the University of the Arts London. DACRC It promotes service design practices to contrast or reduce the opportunity for crime to happen – like preventing bike thefts or improving ATMs users' personal security for instance – and since it is embedded in the university, it works less as a commercial agency and more as a researching institute.

I co-founded Common Ground LTD in London in 2010 delivering projects following a design agency model for about three years, after which we decided to switch to a network-type organization, formed by specialist consultants that could provide their varied expertise. Despite having sometimes worked on commercial projects, Common Ground has always been primarily focused on social sectors to promote collaborative projects that could generate social value and sustainable impact.

Apparently 2008's financial crisis dramatically affected service design and innovation agencies. Did it have any impact to your experience as well?

In 2008 I was ending a two years master degree in industrial design at Central Saint Martins in London, following my studies at ISIA Rome and Plymouth University; at that time teachers asked me to go exploring the boundaries of the discipline and since my dissertation was focused on a social enterprise idea focussed on sustainable development and tourism to Sicily, I quickly realised that the solution to that problem was not achievable simply designing a physical product but it needed an interconnected system of products and services instead. Not to mention people, their relationships and cultural beliefs.

I've always been more interested in areas of intangibility, like the one related to interactions between a user and a product/interface. That's why we created Common Ground and started our own start-up venture, participating to the London's service design community at that time (Service Design Drinks and Service Design Network events), that helped consolidating the previously fragmented scenario to a more structured network of professionals. Yes, the crisis impacted agencies that started to receive less work from clients and designers who started to look for alternative working solutions.

Do you consider service design discipline to be more functional to commercial or social-innovation projects?

I believe it's a matter of choice, that have to take into account ethical and economically sustainable perspectives. For instance, agencies like Engine decided in 2011 to reduce their public-sector activities although they have probably delivered some of the best project in this area with Kent County Council just few years earlier. I'm pretty sure that organizations like ThinkPublic, UsCreates or Snook would say that they are specifically interested in working within the public sector even if to me 80% of the effort is usually spent in educating the client and only 20% in the actual design of the service. I've worked with many organizations in the UK and I believe the most interesting ones are cross-sector that involve the participation of multiple stakeholders.

Which services are required by clients?

Most of the times clients aren't really sure about what they want – except they always want to engage more customers. When we work on commercial projects, we often end up in developing some sort of marketing strategies as not many of our clients are actually interested in improving their business' customer experience. They often want something specific – for instance they believe they need to develop an app – so it's up to you implementing some service optimisation or explaining them that they might not need an app at all.
I also work within education for organizations – they might be companies, universities or governments, that are just interested to learn about design-thinking and innovation processes. I think 50% of clients I work for are in governments/public sector and the other 50% lay in the private sector – but the majority of our incomes is from training or commercial projects.

How many people were involved in Common Ground?

It was formed by the two founding members and involved up to six people for specific projects. Our goal was to be a trusted network of talented people that would be working on social innovation projects, hence we did not want our structure to be the same as a traditional commercial agency. While my partner was in charge of project management I've been mostly working on networking and facilitating stakeholders' conversations. We developed projects across Portugal and the UK until 2013 when I decided to go back to Italy. In February 2016 the company started a new life and was relaunched as commonground Srl, an organization based in Siracusa and interested in developing design thinking and creative model for Mediterranean economies. We are two partners, working with a network of collaborators to promote projects such as Service Design South, a two weeks intense immersive experience on the theory and practice of service design. The second edition will run during Summer 2016 and have a hybrid group of international professionals joining us in Sicily.

You already came across Product Service System Design course. How do you see designers with such a background in a design agency?

I believe PSSD brings a very holistic approach which unfortunately is often not taken in consideration in agencies that work very technically on a specific topic. For instance, digital agencies won't be interested in considering physical products aspects. I've rarely seen this definition outside Italian system but I believe it's a very complete and precise way to describe what a product service system designer is capable of managing. I'm not sure it can be sold as a specific role, but the course is a complete training to understanding complex situation and working on a details scale too. Those zooming-in and zooming-out skills are usually managed only by experience professionals that are able to map complex problems and then act on different levels.

How do you believe service design will evolve in the next few years?

That's a hard one, it would need a collective answer! When ten years ago people were talking about digital economy, nobody believed that those intangible solutions would have become so important. Today we are in a service economy, considering that over 80% of money is spent in services instead of production. This will lead to an increasingly demand of carefully designed services. The same kind of needs will increasingly be taken into account by governments and the demand from external consultancy will be slowly replaced developing internal capabilities.

I've seen private companies with pretty consistent budgets hiring service designers to work on questionable marketing solution and governments with a very low budget dealing with more relevant social problems. Have you experienced something similar?

I believe that the issues these governments are trying to tackle are quite big and budget is often underestimated. Those people think about our solutions as very "soft" intervention and often let us deal

with extremely complex briefs. Very often you get asked to help a local organization engaging 20% more users with a 20% cut on the budget from the previous year, possibly innovating their service offer. Hopefully the interest is constantly increasing, the most difficult thing to change is their mindset and the way service design is being perceived. Marketing is a creative strategy to ideate the best way to sell a product or service while design – in general - is a creative strategy to help improving a product or service. If most of the money are spent on promoting a weak product, I won't use my ideas to help promoting it even better.

I've recently worked on a project for a large shopping centre in the south of Italy, owned by a multinational corporate, that is actually interested in implementing a recycling scheme and reduce its waste production. Looking at organic waste and compost production a new educational garden was designed outside the shopping mall. The project was in partnership with SlowFood and delivers educational workshops to school kids who would come to the commercial centre to learn about conscious consumption and sustainability. We design the signage and the educational materials together with some design students of the University of Naples. Those are the kind of projects, funded by private corporates, which end up having a real impact on the areas they are located in. I believe those are the solutions we want to look for.

Oonagh Comerford
Design Researcher and Project Manager @ Design Council
29 Oct 2015

What is your background?

I'm a design researcher / project manager in a team that runs open innovation competitions to solve issuess within society that could benefit from a design approach. I've been working at the Design Council for about four years now and my background is in fine arts/history of fine arts. I do a lot of design research – interviews, ethnography, desk research.

The types of projects I've worked on in the past few years are predominantly healthcare related: I've just finished a large project looking at how we could improve choice making in elderly social care. And then, prior to that, I worked again in elderly care – on how to strengthen the network within communities, In the past I've also worked in a typical open innovation model focused on improving young people's employment opportunities: partnering with the Nominet Trust, we helped with framing the challenge and creating design briefs to translate problems into opportunities. The call was open for anyone who had an idea – a product or a service - and we had an interesting range of applications. They were shortlisted and the three finalists were supported with design expertiser. In that sense they initially showed up with ideas that were not fully formed and then, after nine months they were ready to launch their product or service.

What's is the background of your agency and where is it located today?

I suppose the Design Council is not a typical agency: it's an enterprising charity. Design Council has many, different aims, but the main one is to promote the use of design to improve lives. We have a policy and research team Who advocate the value design can add to policymaking and government.

The team I'm working in is called the "challenges team" which is much more about the practical application of design to address societal challenges Then we have CABE "commission for architecture and the built environment": They focus on the built environment and they are now integrated with the Design Council.

We predominantly work with people in the UK. Some of the projects we worked on in the past were related to specific contexts - challenge and area: often the funds dictate the geographical area in which we focus our efforts.

Did the Design Council get any recent change in its business?

Probably nothing specifically related to our activity. Generally, I've seen an increasing number of incubators and accelerator programs over the years. And many design agencies being integrated within existing traditional consultancies.

Which kind of projects and clients does your company work more for considering digital, private and public work?

Tech is just an enabler to the service. You could deliver a service design project but not actually knowing how to deal with the technical specification of the digital product. In terms of clients, the majority in the past have been either government departments or trust and foundations.

How many people work at Design Council?

About 70 overall, 16 normally in our team.

How is your team composed by?

A chief design officer, a behavioural scientist, a service designer with a psychology background, a graphic designer. We also had a strategist in the past. It changes accordingly to the project. We had some people

with specific expertise – for example industrial design – but who take a program/project management approach.

Have you ever heard about product service system design?

In terms of service design, I know some people who have done the service design Master's at RCA, but that's just emerging here. Even though obviously there are many people practising service design, most of them seem to have traditional backgrounds such as product, interaction, graphic design rather than having studied service design specifically. It just seems that service designers can probably approach lots of different challenges because they have that skillset, hence they can use different approaches to find out more about what they need to do. It seems like service design is all encompassing in comparision to other disciplines.

How do pssd, service design and design thinking relate in your opinion?

I believe that design thinking is integral to all disciplines . Service design is one aspect.
The main difference to me is that service design is a discipline, while design thinking is an approach. And probably pssd has things in common with both.
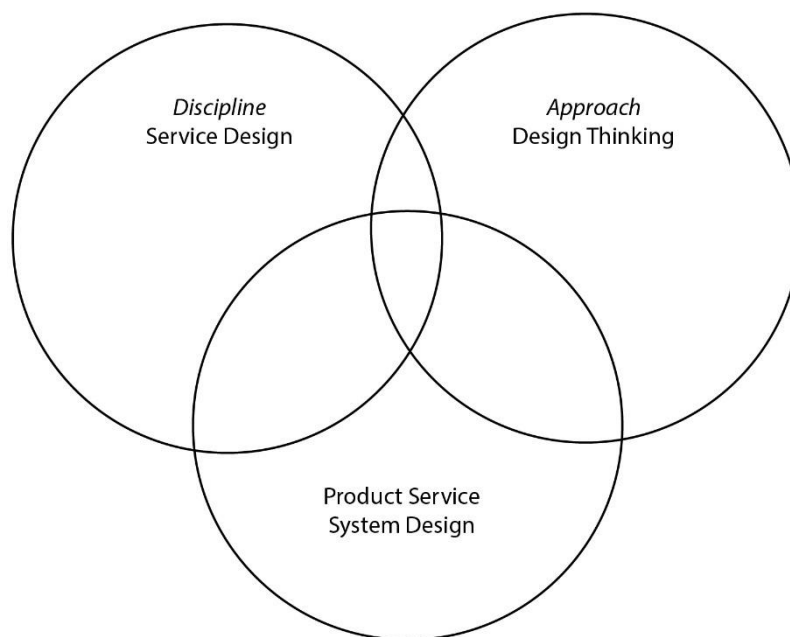
Is the double diamond process actually respected at the Design Council? And which kind of tools do you use?

Yes, it is very much respected.

About the tools I think it depends on the project. We do put a lot of emphasis on the research phase, understanding the issues from the users' point of view – so a lot of in-context research. That could take an ethnographic style approach or maybe a mix of some interviews and shadowing. Then some stakeholders mapping for more organizational kind of work and customer journey mapping for individuals.

Is it possible to actually integrate social innovation aspects within commercial projects and have a business benefit?

It's tricky! I've always been working on social issues, never worked for a client or for a project which is just for commercial purposes. If you think about all of those agencies, for some of them the balance is more towards social aspects but the majority work for commercial reasons and they try to do a bit of both, so working for corporate clients and then do some social related projects on the side.
It appears that more roles are coming up in councils delivering services for people and I think there are roles for social design within those spaces. There are people that I know who are opposed to going to work for "a large car manufacturer" for example, because they are genuinely interested only in those social innovation.

How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?

I think it's more and more in demand I find more people knowing what it is when I talk about it and I think that bigger organisations are starting now to comprehend why service design agencies use this method, because it is actually very beneficial, very useful.

Essentially it is a creative approach to problem solving, isn't it? But I think it's a pretty good one.

James Moed
ex Portfolio Director, Financial Service Design @ IDEO London
4 Nov 2015

What's your background?

I started years ago in broadcasting: my very first job was within a TV and radio company, then I went to a business school and after that I found myself uninspired. I think I was entranced by the creative industry before going to the business school and, when working in media, I felt like being a standard business person… was not really that creative.

In some ways when you get an MBA you learn that a lot of businesses act according to very similar rules. I got an interview with a small design innovation company in California and I basically very quickly found myself at home over there.. I think the best way to describe it is I went from doing typical business in creative fields to doing creative business in very boring fields! You know yourself, when you work in design innovation you find some of the most interesting challenges are in businesses that from the outside would seem to be very dull.

So basically I've been for many years one of the very few MBA in design environments – I guess I've been doing that for eleven years – and now I'm a business person who has quite a lot of experience working with design researchers, designers, technologists and other folks, trying to find that intersections between human need, design, technologies and business.
After working in that design agency in California for a few years I moved to IDEO London and worked there for 8 years. I have now been freelancing for two years.

Why did you go freelancing?

Probably for a few different reasons. I guess the main reason is that I've sensed a change in the business. When I first started working in design, it was a new exciting tool to solve business problems. It was really the first time that designers where asked to move away from "pure form" to thinking. Clients didn't even know what they were asking for: all they knew was "oh my god! You are talking to real people and you are prototyping things! That's magic!" It seemed like they were completely entranced by this method and I think that was the original time when IDEO built its application including a very human centred perspective, to solving problems. Clients didn't know what they didn't know, you could just come in and wow them with new approaches.

So eight years later - many thanks to IDEO and the popularity of design thinking – design shifted from being an outsider way of thinking to being a core set of toolkit. So now those companies know what they don't know - but they are just very bad at it. They now know what a design approach to business problems solving is, they've read enough books on how to do it and they've seen it done – but they don't really have the skills in house to do it. What you find is that there's less of a need to sell big design projects – from a business strategic point of view – and increasingly a need to offer coaching, support, ad-hoc help. So let's say I wanted to take a break from selling big design projects with lots of designers and wanted to move into a place where I could solve client's needs in a more flexible way.

In addition, I've done work specifically in financial service design for a long time: I built my own network there, I wanted to take advantage of that network. And the last thing is – when you work for a big design agency you can pretty much only work for big budgets: within the first year it was a combination of working for startups and doing a lot of work in emerging markets, Africa, south east Asia.. so basically I was realising that I could take more "edgy" work that would teach me more when I was outside of the requirements. You know, in agencies they don't even answer the phone for less then a certain amount of money! So if you want to have an extension to where service design is going, you know that a lot of design agencies are being

bought up and I think what we're finding is that design thinking and the role of design solving skill is becoming another standard pillar of the business toolkit.

What I find interesting is where will pure design thinking agencies go in the next many years. McKinsey has a design group, Bain has a design group, companies are building their design groups in-house. Those groups don't just do design thinking: they use design in the context of all the other parts of the business. Which is always the weakness of design innovation companies, because they are good big thinkers but they are not really good at financial modelling or technology planning: for all those other pieces they have somehow to borrow skills or to make assumptions. So now that design has become one of the five key business skill set, what is left for design innovation agencies to do? Will they actually start going back to do more formal design? Leaving more of the strategy to the business consultancies?

It's still happening, you know. IDEO isn't going away anytime soon but I think that as they created something that was on the edge, that thing is now mainstream and effects finances, effects the type of work you do and effects talent also. More and more people from IDEO and from other companies now find themselves in big companies working for much bigger consultancies - or during stuff on their own, starting companies. Getting talent is harder because there's more place to display good designers.. And the reason why I have work is because there is loads of demand for senior level experience on how to use design as a problem solver. In five years maybe that will change, maybe it will be managed more by people like you who are just new in the business, while people like us will become less "mainstream"… I think it's an interesting moment for design innovation agencies because their skill set is not so special anymore.

Which kind of agency is IDEO?

IDEO is a design innovation company.
I don't know about other agencies much because I haven't work with them. When you work for an agency for quite a while, you don't spend a lot of time analysing the work of other agencies. So I don't really know their practice that well, besides what I've heard.

Which kind of clients did IDEO work more with?

IDEO works mainly with private clients, as well as with the government in the US and in Asia. There's a lot of opportunities, the dilemma is that it can take a lot of time to build a relationship and to work through government processes to get those contracts. You need to have a long business development cycle and a lot of patience. Me, personally, I did two government projects during my entire career.

IDEO London is one of the smaller offices, while in the US, San Francisco has more than 300 people, New York and Chicago are about 80 people.

Which kind of services are usually requested by your clients?

Considering the work I do now, it tends to be a mix: process coaching – as working with senior leaders, trying to figure out how they should bring better design skills into their team, who should they hire, how should they implement even the basic stage gate process for introducing new products. Then a little bit of strategy. Upfront the question is "what should we make?". So, looking at the needs of the market, a little we know about customer insights. In the last couple of years I've done a lot of work helping companies taking what they already knew, complementing it with a little bit of research and helping them prioritise which features, which products they need to be developing when.

Strategic service design is all about "trade-offs", so which needs could we solve with which type of technologies, to achieve which business goals, and which of those need to be achieved now and which later. So a lot of this is about weaving the basic values of service design – what should we prototype - when, what should we prototype with users, how should we understand bigger needs.. All of this things bring into the

strategy process. So then also the strategy is grounded in pure behaviours, so that their plans for long terms are grounded, built and tested alone.

And then I've also work on a bunch of new product development projects – early stage, research, concepts validation, building up an initial service model and then going back into plan it. Answering questions like "which aspects should we test first?", "how should we turn this into a path?", "what is a potential route to the market?", "how do we validate it?".

Those days I do a combination of senior level business coaching and specific product development, and, in the middle, I've overseen or coached design teams. So, again, it's that gap – you have a senior leader which is really creative. With business leaders there's a gap between their team and them. The design team doesn't really handle on how to combine what they're hearing from the business with the business insights to make the right plan and decide what features to build first. The business guy, which hardly understands how designer's interact, doesn't know how to properly brief the design team - and nobody gives proper attention to designers' behaviours at all. It's like I'm filling a gap. A lot of what I'm doing seems like filling a gap and bring service design into the process.

Business/strategic/service designers or whatever is that role in between, is something which isn't usually much requested at a junior level.

It's not that they're not looking for juniors, but the danger with service design is that they are often good thinkers but not good enough at anyone part of what it takes to build the service! I don't even know if it's possible to be a junior service designer. Service design is the combination of different design disciplines to solve a complex problem that involves a combination of people and digital interactions and spaces and so on, right? So in some ways a service designer is just a designer who is good at working with other disciplines to solve a complex problem. What you find at a junior level sometimes is people who aren't really good enough at business, they don't understand business quite enough to be able to drive meaningful business decisions: they don't have enough reputation or even the right set of skills and at the same time they are not even great formal designers!
Their work is "ok", maybe they can or actually even worse they can't actually make anything and so you might say "hey let's build a prototype" and they are like "well I can draw a service journey... we can put on some post-it".. At a junior level to be able to frame and think you have to be very, very good in creative to be worth-it.

Most businesses need that. IDEO would describe it as T-shaped person. However, I've spoken to a recruiter from one of the big consultancies and she said "I don't want anymore design thinkers!" At a senior level being integrator makes sense because you would know enough about all those things. I am generally an integrating general service designer now but because I've seen enough I think it's ok.

There is one thing that is very lacking, and I haven't seen anyone trained for, and is incredibly necessary in the world of design and business: let's just call them prototypers. People who know how to build quick tests don't need to have amazing design skills - but they need the ability to build things "just enough" to get the insights you need. What I found with clients is that there are good business thinkers that come up with concepts and designers who can design when there's a clear idea of what needs to be made, but there's nobody who is good at sketching, running quick user tests or building quick prototypes. Probably it is because design students are not trained enough to be extremely good at quick testing. I believe there's a massive gap that could be covered by the person that comes in, works with business thinkers and says "ok, this is what you want to validate: this is how we are going to validate it". It requires a little bit of skills in research, but definitely more skills in making.

Could you describe how do Service Design, Strategic Design and Design Thinking relate to each other?

It's all design thinking. Using design methods to solve problems. Within that, service design is specifically looking at designing complex services. Services composed by different touchpoints that require different design disciplines. So it's how to design them in an integrated way and which one to use, when. Should this involve more people, more screens, more space? It means deciding how to draw the levers.

I don't even know what that strategic design means. Maybe it is the application of design thinking specifically to solve business problems: using design tools in terms of framing, structuring and strategizing without going as far as making things. But that's a bit fuzzy.. Design without any making is a little bit weak.

Which kind of problem solving process and tools do you use?

I do a lot of work with service journeys. There's a lot of good work with mapping as it helps looking at the differences between what a business need, what people need at various steps in the journey, and help prioritise which of those steps bare the most uncertainties. It helps clients understanding whether their products are actually delivering on and what are people needs and motivations and then figuring out if there is any gap between what they are delivering and what people want.

I'm not really a fan of toolkits: I believe that different type of workshops require different types of facilitations. I just think that if you are a good consultant, then you are always adapting your frameworks. I believe those frameworks and diagrams are just a way of structuring methods and you always have to customise them. You can use them to inspire you, but consulting is about listening to people, helping them frame their problems in a way that makes more sense for them and identify where their knowledge is required. It's fundamentally a bespoke business.

Did you find any problems, something not actually solvable with a design thinking approach?

Yeah, all the time! And I often find that there are problems that don't really need product innovation, but just a new thinking about marketing and distribution as maybe, for example, its just a matter of getting the distribution strategy corrected. I think this is one of the benefits of having an MBA: you can tell if you're facing a marketing problem or a product problem, and so on. And then you can definitely bring design thinking to marketing. Marketing should be human centred and involve testing and prototype just as any other design discipline.

Sometimes you can find out that you really need to understand pricing: often service design overloads with very delightful features without really considering how the pricing would affect what they deliver. I remember there was a company that wanted us to design some sort of premium package and when you look at it, the reason that they wanted the premium wasn't in the packaging. They were really cheap beers sold at corner shops. Often if you want to be premium you can't have mass distribution at a super low price. Sometimes the problem of the consultancies is that you do not really have a design problem. New touchpoints, better experiences, sometime help but it's not mandatory. Good advisory sometimes is about being honest with people and telling them it's not a problem that you can solve. Or that your solution would really change the game for them.

What are your next steps in your career?

I spend a lot of time in advisory and we live in a world where the time it takes you to go from insight to concept to build and test is much shorter. And when you are a consultant you often struggle to get close to delivery and execution. So I think that going forward any designer that is thinking and working on concept and strategy will have a real weakness so my aim is to be closer to markets and delivery.

Oli Shaw
Creative Director & Design Strategy | Group Service Design Director @ Fjord
9 Nov 2015

What is your background?

I'm originally from Cambridge area but in the past few years I have been travelling a lot – and I'm going to spend some weeks in Portorico, Guatemala, Australia and then Geneva doing workshops and research soon. I've been doing service design for years and years and people have agreed and disagreed whether it was user experience, customer experience, service design.. or something else.
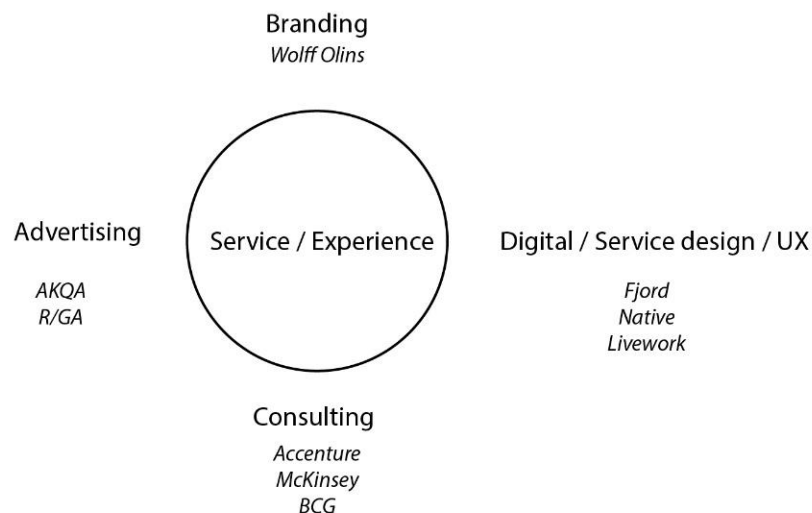
We all know design is in a transitional period. Which major changes did you notice?

What I've seen in the last three/four years is that there is more and more need for business understanding - that doesn't actually mean that as a designer you need to have a full knowledge of business, but at least you have to understand the value that is there. There was a time a few years ago where you can just sell good design and actually do some interesting work; nowadays it is more and more important to understand how design is going to impact business and customers.

Designers of my teams often tell me that they want to impact life of the people they are designing for: how do you know you've been impacting their life? You need to be able to measure it: in order to measure it you need to start getting into what I call business design - which is kind of the numbers behind the graphics, the interactions and the experiences.

The split that I've been looking at more is within Ad agencies, - like AKQA, Wieden + Kennedy - that are moving more towards what service design is doing.

This is happening both among traditional "Above The Line" agencies and branding agencies as well like McCollins. They Recently hired a couple of good people doing more of experience design: they were saying that by doing brand strategy they also do the service that goes into that. And then you have digital agencies and service design agencies like Fjord, IDEO and RDA and they are all combining into this area. There are also consulting companies; more and more of them are buying design agencies. So Fjord used to be in the previous group but is now in the "consulting" group.

Branding
Wolff Olins

Advertising
AKQA
R/GA

Service / Experience

Digital / Service design / UX
Fjord
Native
Livework

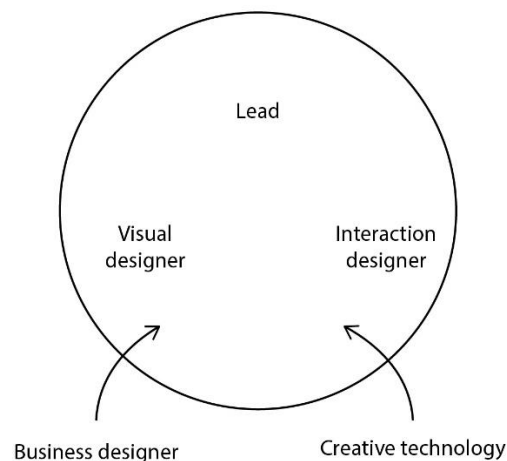Consulting
Accenture
McKinsey
BCG

As the market is changing, agencies are trying to integrate more skills in their team: some of those agencies hire mostly specialists while others prefer more "hybrid" people. How do you balance the two? Do you think that there's a specific age for becoming an "hybrid"?

Not really. Sometimes it's because of the individuals themselves, sometimes the hybridization happens because of the environment they are working in: some environments don't want hybrids, they want people to fill a box - other environments stretch people too far. When it comes to putting a team together, to solve a problem, I respect the "product journal" to understand the business, the commercial value and the impact, the technology feasibility, the customers and so on.

So when putting a team together there's always a lead, a visual design component, an interaction, there could be a creative technology component, a business design component. There could be only 3 people or up to 4 - 5 and sometimes there's a need to add even additional components - but there always needs to be a core team that solves the problem - and I blend the skills accordingly to solve it.

At a certain point there's someone that needs to visualise something, to present a flow, or to put an excel behind the business decisions, but up until that point I encourage all the team members to get involved. Technology people to sketch wireframes as much as visual designers, interaction design people to understand business numbers behind the specific stream and so on.

I've been building teams and hiring people for the last 8 years. I always try to find people that are "hybrids". So they can do interaction, visual, research or whatever it might be.

How did the recent acquisition of Fjord changed the work you do within the company?

Fjord has been acquired by Accenture two years ago: I believe what changed is the scale of the problems and the abilities to create more impact - which are both bigger. I've also worked in other agencies - big and small, before Fjord - and one of the challenges has always been having the right access to the right level within an organization to create impact. At Fjord we've got a 15 years of relationship with some of those clients - so if you need to go and see the CEO of the corporate company you're working for, Accenture gives you the ability, for instance, to explain how important that specific part of the project will be – or equally the CEO might come to us in case he needs help framing a specific unknown problem.

How does Fjord relate to service design?

I'd say it's pretty tricky to find a clear line for that. There's only an handful of agencies which actually go out and say they do pure service design, but you find most places will do some sort of service design. It pretty much depends by what do you need to get from that definition, because sometimes you need to have a job title just for corporate reasons: maybe you are an interaction designer but you do a bit of

everything, or maybe you are a visual designer and you're equally as good in going out and doing field research. Fjord is one of those places which might not have "pure service designers", but they actually have them and they just have a different corporate title

Does your company work more within the public or the private sector?

In the UK, the GDS (Government Digital Services) team "swallowed up" a lot of good service designers, and they work within the public sector: only a few agencies do government work. At Fjord we have done some public work but it would be only a 5% compared to a 95% of private clients. The reason why it is that high, is because the Digital Government Services probably had quite a hard line.

Which kind of services are usually requested by your clients?

Normally clients come to us with a business problem – maybe they want to engage new audience or make their business more efficient, or reimagine an existing product-service. It's more fundamental business problem they come to - and from there the job is to put together whatever skills you need to solve the problem.

Where is Fjord located?

London, Milan, Sao Paolo, Hong Kong, Berlin, Toronto, Seattle, Madrid, Paris, Stockholm, Helsinki, Istanbul, Sydney, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Atlanta.

How many people work in London's Fjord?

*Somewhere between 50 to 80*

How is your team composed by?

The team is composed by three to five people depending on the size of the problem - but that can be timed by two if it's a big problem to solve.

Have you ever heard about Product Service System Design?

We have several people in our Fjord studios around the world that are from PSSD, that's why I know PSSD as a Master's course.

However, looking at the academic definition, it seems to me a bit too much academic and not really human, nor engaging.

From my perspective, you either start with a business problem or with a customer problem and there is always a symbiosis between the two. The business problem is going to impact a human need: maybe you are addressing a pain point, so you're looking to delight customers – and that decision is either going to cost money, save money, or make money. There's always a symbiotic relationship between the two things, hence doing PSS design is about understanding and identifying the human need/motivation, describing it and turning that into a strategy that needs to be grounded into business insights.
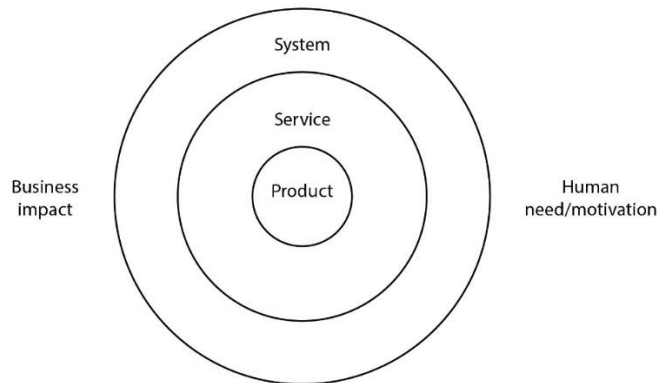
What I find more and more is the need to make that strategy more tangible very quickly, through a video, a customer journey or a prototype. Ultimately, you are going to move to the executional phase: release it into market, or scaling.

Considering what you mentioned about hybrid designers, do you think a formerly PSS designer – which is a "hybrid" by definition - should specialise developing a specific skillset or keep proceeding being hybrid?

You could do both: you have a human need/motivation or - on the other side - a business problem: so you can specialise either in one of this areas. You can lean more and more towards understanding customers, or more towards understanding business - or you can have an overview and have it all together. So you can do both.

Which kind of problem solving process does Fjord respect?

I remember finding online a really good image, a couple of years ago: it actually mapped all of the different design methodologies from pretty much every big studio - and they literally laid into each other. I've seen documents from many agencies showing their process and methodology over the years and there's not much difference among each other. Each one has its own way to describe it or sell it, but the fundamentals are there: identify the problem and do a tangible strategy.

What's more interesting is client's emotional journey as they go through one of these processes. Maybe they are publishing an app on the app store or releasing a new platform, so they question: "will anyone turn up to me?" or "how do we go from 100 people to 1000 to 10000 to a million?" - because there's a big uncertainty here. They find themselves excited before you start, and then when you show them the double diamond; but then there's a point where clients start to panic, because it gets too complicated.

This is for me where business design becomes very important, because you can start to rationalise, justifying and prioritising things: maybe the technical feasibility, or how much time a specific solution would take compared to another one. Through business lenses you know how you're going to reach specific results.

How do you think service design is going to evolve in the next few years?

I hope it actually moves more towards branding in a different way. So if you consider you have the brand experience - and maybe the service is a part of that - it's how you talk about it, what the identities and the values are. More and more I'm seeing the services we design, based on the business-systems we're transforming and changing, need to be communicated, and someway the experience should be noticed vice-versa.
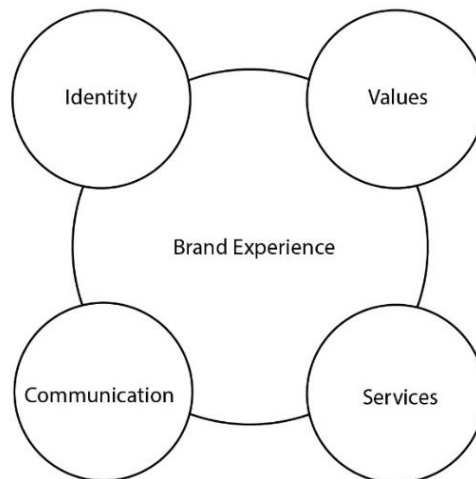
So they are integrating: we'll see a lot of change in management, more internally with some of the systems we're re-designing. We need to organise the change management: how are people trained, how we communicate the change, which tools are we going to change. We need to make sure they understand why they're changing, how the culture of the company is going to be effected and then, on the other hand, we do all of that because we're trying to make the customer experience the best possible. The only way to do it is actually by empowering employees to be able to do their job.

From a Fjord perspective we've done our thinking around the topic of "Living Services", which is the combination of everything becoming more digital and consumers having more of what we call "liquid expectations". So how to move from designing services created from the mass audience to creating services which adapt very quickly, becoming hyper-personalised.

How about the impact on social or environmental sustainability? Is it actually considered in daily-life projects by agencies?

We do quite a few social innovation projects. For instance, my team in Istanbul has recently been working on something called Child Growth Index: in developing country it is very hard to see if children are growing or having any learning difficulties, and there's only a paper-based system to monitor that at the moment. So my team actually went out to India - because this is where the pilot is happening before being released around the world – to work on the digitalization and redesign of the service and the processes for monitoring and measuring children in developing markets: how they are growing, identifying any learning difficulties quickly and bringing them all together.

Another way of looking at it social/environmental impact is using service and system design skills: we try to make sure we make things "delighting" customers doing economically sustainable business. But then we try to integrate social/environmental recommendations - and if we do it right we should be able to make customers happy, do business with a positive impact and also do things on a ethically sustainable level. If you look at this kind of matrix around customer happiness, technical feasibility and business impact - you can easily add in a fourth in your prioritisation and it's just a case of balancing those levers.

It seems that there's a gap between commercial projects and charity agencies/projects. A gap in terms of investments, in terms of communication and the way they are presented. Do you see that?

In terms of gap during the years I've seen quite a few agencies just focusing on doing this kind of projects. Mostly survive just two/three years; there's a couple I've worked with during the years, but as long as they remain focused only on those projects they don't seem to make much money. And again, even for the designers working there, is not as quite as they sort of sacrifice their life in that: as much as they want to do it, they can only sustain a year or two before they actually need to earn some money and have a normal life, like deciding to form a family, for example.

The gap that I see, is in how to help those organisations to actually better get money or free services from other places. There's a lot of big companies who would happily give some money, or donating, or being part of the brief to collaborate, but I don't think that those organisations by themselves are set up well enough to try to get those investments.

I've seen a lot of designers within Fjord or other organisations finding these companies they want to work with and then securing founds internally within the company to do it. In Fjord we have the ability to prepare a project: for the one that we are carrying out we said to the company: "this is the project plan, we need two designers to work for this period of time" and then, after we signed up the permission, we just went and work on the project.

How do you contribute to the service design community? How do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

I try to take part to a lot of talks, workshops and conferences - part of what I've been doing has been building teams in London or across the world. Part of that is growing them, mentoring them, helping them understanding. I suppose how I help is trying to create more opportunity for people to understand what area they want to fit into, what area they want to develop, transform into. Over the last couple of years I've noticed more and more people wanting the transition from traditional vertical to other disciplines: project managers becoming business designers or visual designers becoming creative technologists.. For me it doesn't make any difference as long as they are able to solve the problem. I suppose that mixing around, creating opportunity for people to do that is a thing. And, generally, I always try to do design work that can actually impact people at scale.

Jenni Parker
Innovation Consultant @ FutureGov, freelance Service Designer
London, 16 Nov 2015

What is your background?

When I was in high school I wanted to be a psychologist, understanding how people think and behave. I did really like studying it, but I felt like something was missing. Since I liked Art & Design I applied to a Product Design course thinking that would be a more tangible way to respond to people's needs. I realised that my favourite classes were the entrepreneurship ones, where we had to build an idea, develop a business plan and so on. One of my professors told me about service design, and told me to have a look at the agencies in London.. At that time there were only Livework and Engine who were born around 2006-2007 as agencies – and it was the first time you would hear "service design" as a buzzword. I applied to work at Participle during the period when it was founded; unfortunately, I know it has just recently closed down. Everything was exciting at the time and I started to look for a good master's degree to get a proper academic experience in service design. Norman McNally, formerly a lecturer at my university, told me about a really good course in Milan, Italy called PSSD, which I applied to.

I think we were the third generation of PSSD students and as you know there are and were a lot of talented, hardworking people from everywhere in the world. I really liked how it opened up my thinking and made me change direction again from my previous idea of service design. It taught me that you can't solve any problem simply with a single product or a service or a campaign: what I learned and is still with me after all these years is that you have to understand the problem from a "systems" perspective - and to develop solutions from a systems perspective.
That's why I consider myself a "systems thinker": that's a sort of a legacy that I carry on from my PSSD period because I don't think of myself as a specific designer but more as a multidisciplinary designer. And I never wanted to apply those skills working for corporate or commercial industry.

Why?

I always wanted to do social impact work: I originally studied psychology because I wanted to help people. I originally did service design because I saw it as a way to create social impact through services. During my master I stumbled across a very interesting article about how mobile phones were changing service delivery in developing contexts, and I was fascinated by how a basic Nokia phone was being transformed from a communication tool to a device that could deliver services - such as health, education and mobile banking services.

I asked Valentina Auricchio if I could develop a thesis topic around this phenomenon, in order to apply and improve my skills in design for social impact. Rebecca Pera introduced me to the ITC-ILO (International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, the United Nations agency for workers' rights). The ITC-ILO specialize in education and they were looking for an intern to explore the opportunity for mobile learning in developing countries within their big, international training campus in Turin.
Since their model was not sustainable because people had to come from all over the world to do their training, they were looking for "distance learning" opportunities. They already started working in the e-learning space, and they knew that in developing contexts people had better access to mobile phones than computers, so they wanted to understand how could they deliver mobile learning.
They were not looking for a designer - I don't know what they were looking for because in my head the designer is the solution to every problem! But I was accepted and started my 6 month internship alongside my thesis. Talking to people who were doing the courses and that were living in East Africa revealed some interesting insights and we realised we didn't have to work on an app, but we developed a toolkit instead

and we agreed to make it open source so that any other organization could use it as well. So I was kind of a product developer for them, I didn't really design a product service system. Actually I don't think any project you design is a PSS at the end - I think it's more a mind-set.

After that I ended up having a three year career in international development and humanitarian aid.
I worked with the UN for a year, including a job in the technology department of UNHCR, which is the UN refugee agency based in Budapest. I was working on smartphone apps for mobile learning; again I was not doing full PSSD, probably more service design.
When I became freelance I spent a couple of years working in the international development context. I worked with the Nike Foundation where I helped them move from an insight-led design process to applying co-creation methodologies with adolescent girls living in poverty, then I worked on a 9 months project in London with BBC Media Action. The project was focused on supporting local media organizations in Asia to develop better communication around climate change.

After that I decided I wanted to go back to my original plan doing public service innovation and service design in the UK. I collaborated with the Innovation Unit on a project involving Policy Lab – a small hub which aims to bring design thinking into UK government through policy making, and then I ended up working for FutureGov.

When was FutureGov founded?

It was founded 8 years ago.

Which kind of organization is it?

They describe themselves as "the digital and design company for public services".
There are three teams in FutureGov: Organization Design, Service Design, and Product Design. So it's a combination of user researchers, service designers, people who used to work in local government and developers.

What kind of clientele does FutureGov receive?

It's mainly public sector work, largely with local governments, however they have also worked a lot with GDS (Government Digital Service) and for UNDP abroad. They are also doing a project for the United Arab Emirates at the moment – but it's all within the public sector.

Which services are usually requested by your clients?

Only in the last couple of years I actually saw people looking for service design, which is an interesting change, but usually, since we work within the public sector, the brief is "we need to save money and we want to make services better for people".
As you know there have been public sector cuts in the UK, austerity measures, so it's quite hard to deliver services when budgets are being dramatically reduced, sometimes even quartered from what they were five years ago.

So that's the main driver when they start to look for FutureGov. They know that they need to reinvent everything: we teach them to think as start-ups, as new customer-centred businesses – which is why we have the Organisation Design team.

Most of the time when we speak about social innovation, it means clients actually have to invest money. How do you combine this with the public sector cuts?

We try to teach the "invest to save" model, meaning they need to invest a little more in understanding their customers and the problems in order to design better solutions – that sometimes even means a little more investment upfront to develop better technologies.. But it all drives longer terms solutions.

We try to connect them to facilities: we let them think more as platforms, like AirBnb that is a platform that delivers services, instead of owning products, and then the other theme that comes in is prototyping - which is a new approach to experiment without investing a lot of money. So we talk a lot about low-fidelity prototypes to test new ideas.

What is the location of Future Gov?

The HQ is in London and they have another office in Australia.

How many people work at your company (London agency only)?

About 40 people.

What is the contribution of each member on your team and how is it applied?

I'm on the organisation design team. There's about 5 of us - we're called "innovation consultants" and our role is kind of project management duties: we manage the clients and we are the strategic lead on each consultancy project: at a certain point we meet the service design team and the product design team - and sometimes I am more a service designer than a project manager: it's flexible. We not only manage the client but try to implement systems thinking around other part of the organisations, trying to connect the dots. Then there is the Service Design team which includes about 10 people including service designers, user researchers and UX designers.

You mentioned the "Product Design" team. What do you mean by product design?

Product design for FutureGov is only digital, no industrial design is involved. There are front and back-end developers and project managers. They work in an Agile environment with sprints, user stories and standups.

What about the service designers' background?

Some of them used to be product designers, some UX coming from a computer science background, then we have a visual designer with a graphic design background. We don't have anyone who actually studied service design yet. FutureGov is a bit concerned about hiring people who just graduated from service design programs, they are trying to get mainly senior designers with a few years of experience.

Considering you are a Product-Service System Design graduate, how would you describe the role?

I usually describe it as a multidisciplinary international course that leads you to kind of forget your former design education (product, graphic, fashion..) and forces you to think more about problems and solutions. So instead of looking at the single design opportunity, it is more about understanding the problem from a really broad systems perspective. This leads you to identify underlying problems and then think about every possible solution to solve that problem, eventually designing a system based solution which is not a single solution but a combination of multiple services/physical touchpoints/physical spaces and communication. So all these elements exist in a system based solution space.

I think strategic design and design thinking are the same thing.
Many service designers are actually quite good in "wider thinking", but I would consider service design to be a small part of product service system design.
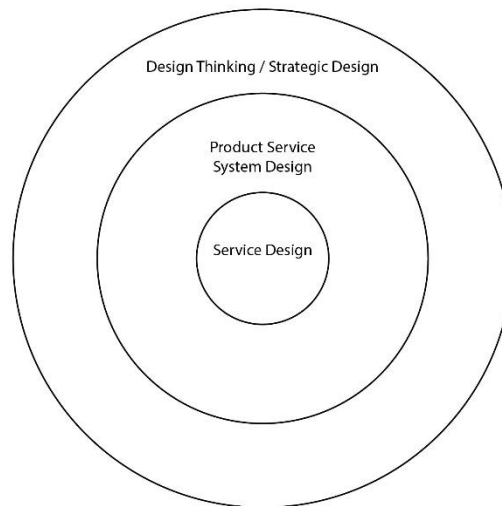
What problem solving process does your company embrace?

FutureGov follows the double diamond process, but it's mainly used for communicating our work to clients. About the tools, in our department we don't use many tools: we use system mapping, we do a lot of communication within the organisation - understanding who are the stakeholders, how to get them involved, to take them on a journey with the project. Regarding the Service Design team, we use traditional tools for ethnographic research, we develop custom tools like mapping tools, printing maps and asking people to draw on them, social network mapping tools and analysis, very basic journey mapping, tools for capturing the findings and we use personas for almost every project. Plus, we do service design prototyping.

We've talked about FutureGov. How about your freelancing work?
What do you do to move past not having a team when freelancing?

I try to overcome the problem by working closely with my clients, building their internal capacities, organising workshops, introducing my tools to their team while continuing to use my methodology.

Are clients keen to spend their time on these workshops?
Yes, most of the time they are very positive. Most of those things are pretty new to them: their daily time is usually spent behind a desk, so involving them in original activities makes them excited. I used to do "brainstorming breakfasts" for example, and people would come often to contribute to the project even if they were not working on that specific project. I think it's also a way to spread the methodology inside the organisation. Another way to overcome the "team-lacking" problem is trying to keep getting people from the social innovation world involved, exchanging feedback with them on the things we are working on. There is a quite interesting "social innovation scene" in London and I usually go to meet-ups and events to keep it alive.

What process do you follow when carrying out your service design consultant role?

I'm quite obsessed by processes and methodologies.
I spent almost 6 months at Nike Foundation developing a methodology. It took me quite a lot of time to develop my own, which is displayed on my website. I guess it's pretty much the same as anybody else's – it's probably just the way it makes sense in my head. It's composed by three parts – that's why I don't use double diamond, it doesn't fit for me – the first part is all about researching, then there's the co-creating and finally the prototyping phase.
I really like the diverging and converging steps of the double diamond diagram, but I think it lacks a bit on the actual iterating side of the process which cannot be perfectly represented in a linear diagram. I use the double diamond a lot to explain the process to my clients, but I believe that if no one is there explaining why

it's a diamond and what you go through as a designer, it is not as self-explanatory: it requires a narrative around it. However, I think we still need those kind of tools to explain people what we actually do – especially to those who are not very convinced design is the correct approach – so that they can go away with a clearer picture of what we do for them.

Which tools do you use in your freelancing activity?

I use journey mapping and personas the most, I think they are the most important.
I see journey mapping as a collaborative exercise with the client, as a way to present them the information, so I do workshops where I get people to actually map their experiences and process and then create the graphic afterwards. You can use it to document existing experiences and to show possible future ones.

Considering your background and sensibility about social innovation/sustainability, how does it work for you in your daily life? Other design agencies like Fjord and IDEO do talk about it a lot: do you think they are actually producing impact?

I believe those bigger agencies relate to sustainability as a core part of their business model. They rely on it for marketing reasons. I like the projects but I don't think they do it for fun.
Anyway I think there's a lot of opportunities in the social innovation space: I haven't been working for any big corporate clients but I could say I've never had any "income" problems – there's a misconception that if you want to work in those "sustainable" projects you'll end up being poor: I get paid well for doing social innovation work. I think you just need to have the confidence to go for it, spreading the word, going to the client and explaining what you are doing - because they are not looking for you. That's why I've been freelancing for so long. I had to talk a lot to people to explain what I was doing. I believe, whatever is your interest, being it public sector or charities or whatever, it's all about just going out and exposing yourself.

How do you believe service design will evolve in the next few years?

I've seen service design exploding in the last year. Years ago when I was looking for work and I didn't have any network I was calling up recruitment agencies and they couldn't even register me on their system because there was no box for service design, they didn't know what it was. And now it's all calls and emails from recruiters because agencies are trying to meet the demand. This is just in the past 12 months. Suddenly agencies are having a dedicated part in their websites, they know what it is and they are collaborating with big service design studios to find talent.
Many of the leading service design studios are being bought by large management consultancy agencies which is a bit sad but it's also a recognition that it is what their clients are asking for and they don't have the capacities internally.
I know for graduates it's pretty hard.
I also believe there's a bit of discrimination against people that aren't British in London – which I really don't like – I think there's a lot of really talented designers that are not being considered, especially from Politecnico's PSSD. Agencies tend to hire experienced people and don't really believe junior service designers are good enough, but I believe it will change as soon as they realise they actually have the capabilities to help them to solve problems.

Eva Kirchberger
DESMA Research Associate @ Engine London
17 Nov 2015

What is your background?

I'm a researcher, but I've always worked in the creative industry for corporates. I've been for a year in a branding agency where my role was the "insights manager" and with my team we brought design thinking to the whole branding agency. Moreover, as part of a program for design management I've also worked for three months at LiveWork and now I've been at Engine for more than three years. The program ended but I'm still there providing strategic advice to the board on business decisions and for specific projects.

Considering Engine Design, how did you recently see the business evolving?

I've seen changes at all levels: what I've studied in my PHD and what I'm trying to unravel is where this need for change actually comes from. It seems like Engine has been responding to some requests from the market – service design is very trendy now and as we all know consultancies like McKinsey, Accenture, as well as digital firms are moving into this field. That causes a lot of pressure for Engine and also the clients' expectations change because they start to compare the offered services to what they get from other firms. As those firms are mostly from other disciplines and areas, it is a strange place for Engine to be in because there are some expected things they wouldn't necessarily have done.

On the other hand, it is also a huge opportunity because different expectations and needs make projects become bigger and they become comparable to the one which are typically done by management consultancies. So there's this kind of frenemy situation: the management consultancy is kind of the enemy because they pitch for the same jobs, but at the same time they can be clients. Therefore, Engine has started to respond working on projects that become longer, more complex. They actually call it Design+ and it takes care about the implementation phase more. If you think about this double diamond process people use – I think they've mostly done the research ideation and strategy phases but not walk so much down the path of implementation.

Which kind of agency is Engine?

Engine is a pure service design agency.

Which kind of clients does it work for?

Engine doesn't do any public work anymore. It was an intentional decision, took many years ago. From what I understood within the public sector, projects don't have the same budgets as they have in the corporate world.
In terms of digital there are no "digital-only" clients: it's the other way around. If we consider service design as designing experiences both on and off-line - that's how I explain it to people - then you actually have digital cutting across anyway. You also have digital increasingly in the physical world. That is inherently part of it and therefore I would say that Engine works closely with digital designers or with digital agencies they partnered with when they have to deliver something related, just because the whole service is much bigger than just the digital side.

Which kind of business design services are usually requested by your clients?

Business design is kind of new term and I think everyone defines it differently. We don't use the term business design, however since we move more into implementation we move more into change management. We think more about how the customer experience effects a company: how would it impact

on how people work? On the processes? They are basically all relevant, being the core offering. Remember that service design is about designing experiences.

How many people work at Engine?

Around 25 in London.

What is the contribution of each member on your team and how is it applied?

It depends by the size of the project. If it's a small project there are two people involved in it from the beginning to the end: the role of the service designer at Engine is very generalist, so people can actually do everything – from doing research to ideating concepts or doing workshops. They sometimes even go to the client side and help them implementing. I don't say this might be the future's structure but it is how it currently works. When it's a complex project such as the latest in Dubai – we are talking about a two-years engagement – then it's a bigger team of about 5 members and you can also find more hybrid skills. That team is composed by a change manager, a graphic designer, a product designer, someone coming more from a digital background. So it's more varied.

Service design agencies like Engine and Livework have pure hybrid – multidisciplinary minded people in their team whereas agencies like IDEO or Fjord tend to look a bit more for specialists. What's the reason behind this?

There might be several reasons for this. First of all the size, as IDEO is much bigger then Engine, and then also the nature of the job you do. If your firm is very generalist, people will probably be able to understand and manage a bit of everything. But probably, when a project becomes bigger, there might be the need to specialise. Another reason is how mature the company is. Engine might increasingly have more specialists on-board in the future – we don't know yet. Moreover, IDEO was known for bringing product innovations and with product you can be much more radically innovative; in service is much more difficult because it is mostly tied to people's behaviours. So to be radically different it's tricky and therefore you maybe don't need so many different specialists.

What about service designers' background?

Engine has a strong product design background coined by the founders, whereas for example Livework has a more digital background. We know that founders always coin the DNA of a company hence at Engine there are more product designers while at Livework more digital designers.
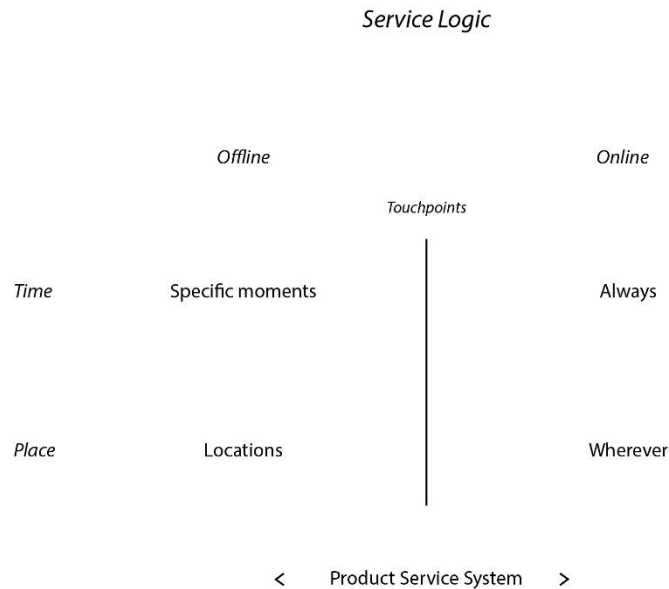*But then you also have interaction and graphic designers. I believe the specialism is not the most important characteristic to hire someone, there are many others which are more important. For example in smaller, boutique agencies you should fit in the culture of the company rather than having a particular skill.*

Have you ever heard about product service system design?

Yeah, I've heard about it at a conference where I spoke. But still, reading the different academic descriptions, I can't really understand what it is and how it connects to the work we do. Apparently the difference is that a product service system designer doesn't consider the problem from a customer perspective but potentially also from the provider's point of view. But I'm still not sure how is it applied in practical terms.

That's my personal definition: you've got online and offline touchpoints. In terms of time and place: online is "always" and "wherever", offline instead is limited to a specific moment and a specific location. Sometimes digital devices are embedded in this physical world so there's not a real separation. If you change a touchpoint, it would affect the wider system of this company.

We at Engine apply the "service logic" considering that anything could provide or modify an experience. The experience might involve using a gadget only and maybe it might use a space or an artefact.. We don't distinguish. So when you talk about product, service, system for us they are all the same – it's just a matter of what delivers what. What I think is relevant is to understand how does that change the place we are in, the processes we use and how does it change people's behaviour.

Service Logic

	Offline	Online
	Touchpoints	
Time	Specific moments	Always
Place	Locations	Wherever

< Product Service System >

That's the impact we basically have to redesign when we are in the physical world. Online world is not as complex – because it's digital only – however as said it can be embedded in the offline world. So if you think "how could the experience be better", perhaps we might want to implement a screen near the table in a restaurant to upgrade the dining experience.. We don't distinguish because the digital revolution we are in is increasingly blurring the boundaries with the physical world, so it's harder to say it's just a digital service or just a physical product.

Which kind of problem solving process does your company follow?

The process present on Engine's website is respected. I just think that the implementation phase has a long tale and is increasingly important while the research phase used to be very important but there are now a lot of research-only agencies so it is less relevant. I believe there is a shift and emphasis but we follow that process pretty much throughout.

You need to be careful that people do actually sketch and talk about things they do really believe in instead of just replicating someone else's ideas. For example many people talk about the double diamond because they heard about it but if you really look at what they do today, are we really sure they are following that process? I don't think so.

How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?

You should read my book which is coming out soon! I think there are different possible scenarios and we cannot predict which one will become reality. It depends by the different firms behaviours and by the market as a whole. I think that quality is important: clients might be satisfied by service design results or they might decide it's just a trend that don't really deliver on his promise. So I think there's a bit of a risk there.

Those are the possible scenarios I've outlined: Option A could be we will have more companies re-labelling themselves as service design agencies and increasingly doing service design, claiming less they are doing digital, which will just be absorbed by service design as a whole.

Option B is that digital design will actually own service design and everything we understand related to service design will automatically be implied when talking about digital design.

Option C: the label become useless as everyone does something different and clients don't really understand what it actually is hence service design will still be done, not as a distinct practice but as other disciplines absorb its tools. So it could be that consumer marketing uses the user journey mapping to do what they do and people talk less and less about service design. I don't think there's a risk for it to disappear – it might just become less demanded.

The opportunity is that if service design steps up more, projects can become bigger and service design companies could partner more with management consulting agencies to work on huge customer experience projects. So, we will see.

Jonas Piet
Partner and Lead Service Designer @ InWithForward
18 Nov 2015

What is your background?

In the last few years I've been working in London in the social sector with Participle designing a service for socially isolated older people and with Engine working for the public sector. I've also worked in the Netherlands on a project involving homeless young people. What I'm doing in Vancouver now is the result of an iterative improvement of my previous experiences that left me partially unsatisfied. As from the website: "We make social services, neighborhood networks, and public policies that measurably shift outcomes with and for the most marginalized folks by collecting local ethnographic data, testing & tweaking interventions, and creating immersive learning experiences to spread the thinking and practice. We don't use a fancy step-by-step process for this. We use a blend of theories and methods from design, social psychology, philosophy, and history."

For the project we are carrying out in Canada, I partnered first with the service deliverer – in order to create the conditions to do the further work. Then the next stage with InWithForward - hence the project over there – was to do a nine months prototyping that we just before the summer - and during that part we grew the team.

So initially we were on the ground with three of the business partners and three of the people from the organization we were working with - six in total - and before the summer we grew the team to about ten people prototyping one of the service ideas we came out with. The Project is called Kudoz "a platform connecting folks with cognitive disability to learning experiences". Now we are one stage further: we are about to go live with Kudoz, to implement it. One of the things which is crucial and we haven't figure out yet is the business model - because we've been one year only on Kudoz - that I think says a lot about where we are with InWithForward as well.

One of the (other) important things worth mentioning I think is capabilities building. One of the things that we've seen services fall flat in public sectors - and in commercial work as well - is that once the project is developed and delivered that's the end of it. The people that are in the organisation that are supposed to deliver the new service don't always know how to take it further, how to actually implement it. Turns out the reality is slightly different from how you expect it - or you haven't got the right people on board to develop the service. Things stop working, and that is something we want to target from the beginning - hence involving people from the organization or hiring local people during the prototyping phase. That's another big thing that we are trying to establish in our work - more than what we've done in the past.

Since you founded your agency two years ago, I assume this is your main project. Did you have any side project in the meantime?

Yes, we had a small previous project in the Netherlands that was around domestic violence and we worked with the "Women's Shelter" in the Netherlands as well.

Which kind of agency is yours?

We don't like to call what we do "service design", we are just using the service design approach aside other approaches.

Your work is all within the social sector. Would you like in the future to work within private or public clients?

We don't call the people we work with "clients", our relationship is quite different. We work a lot in partnerships. This means that at the moment we're equally partner alongside the three largest disability

service providers in Canada - but having said that we think that whatever we do, our work is about system change and that must involve public sector organizations.

So, to give an example, at the moment in Vancouver we've been hardworking heavily with the ministry of community living as well. We don't see them as clients. They are an important actor in the system because most of the money on the sector is obviously public money. So in order to create something that has any sort of bigger impact you need to also change something in the system - hence involving public sector organisation. So we don't call them clients and we wouldn't start there.

We start with a specific group of end users in a specific place and then we partner up with social sectors organizations and then we see who else is necessary in the mix to make the project work; often times that would be public organisations and sometimes that might be private sector organisations, but it really depends by what we need by them. And if we have a look to how much time we spend, we can say we spend around 20% of our time with public sector organisations.

What's the background of the members of your team?

We recruit people according to the role that we need in that specific time. So we initially recruited a designer, a senior manager and a community worker from one of the organisations we've partnered with; we hire people sometimes on temporary roles - we've worked with documentary film makers, writers, learning specialists and professors. And I think roughly 1/3 of them are designers: a bunch of people with a science background, some with a business administration background. We're often interested in people that have a very specific content background. So that's the point of difference I guess between us and an IDEO or an Engine. For us it's important to have people with a content knowledge in the team and we often try to build the capacity in the organisation. So we have these people that might spend half a year with us and be really part of our team - and it's interesting because at the same time they don't need to be in our payroll as we might not have the resources to hire them directly, so we "borrow" them from the organisation we're partnering with. Sometimes we even hire end-users as well.

You said you never heard about PSSD. The academic definition describes it as a designer which adopts an holistic problem solving approach, working across different fields.

Yeah I think there's people who are reasonably good in all of those different fields and are able to "satisfy the user needs and the company profitability and social goals." But they're rare. I've worked with a few of them. I think even if you have people who are good in everything you still need more and more person on the team because the project tends to turn bigger hence it is just more interesting to have people from a different background because they bring in different perspectives and a whole different network. And by the way the academic definition for a product-service-system is so broad on that level of detail that would describe anything which is not just product design. It equally fits a service designer and I can't point out the difference. You should go more in detail to point out the differences.

The research is aimed at contextualising London's ecosystem: you have been working for Engine as a Senior Service Designer. Why did you move from London?

After 4 years I was tired of London: I'm from the Netherlands and wanted to go back. It was a life choice.

Would a project like Inwithforward work in the London ecosystem?

At the moment we travel to where we see there might be interesting work to do - that's why we ended up in Canada; in theory there's no reason why it couldn't work in the UK but in the market there are a lot of other organisations which do something slightly similar, in the same space - so I guess there's more competition.

Another relevant signal I think it's worth mentioning is that Participle just closed down. Anyway, I'm not excluding we might end up working in the UK in the future.

What's your view about the social innovation scene?

We're not really involved anymore with the social innovation scene - we go to conferences, one of our business partners writes scientific papers, but a lot of it seems a bit inward looking. It seems to me that a lot of the people who are active on the scene - in order to have time to be active don't have a lot of time to do actual on-the-ground work - so it seems that either people are academics or are working in organisations that try to support other organisations. And then you've got a bunch of people that is spending most of the time on the ground. And if you have a look to some of the most interesting projects that have been done in the last few months, they are not necessary related to the social innovation scene.

How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?

I'm a bit out of touch with what's going on in London. What I've seen from the colleagues in London Is that some of the organisations in London focus on bigger multinational clients rather than doing smaller work. I think there's less design and more advisory work in it. What I think is more important and I've seen people talking about is "implementation": I believe service designers became quite good in design and research, there's pretty good people in designing user centred services - but I've never seen those beautiful ideas actually implemented. I hope to see some of that in the future, it' something that we struggle with and try to focus on a lot from the very beginning in many different ways.

I personally can't take people seriously if they just present some design research or a bunch of interesting ideas and not showing me something that's been actually implemented within an organisation. I wonder if those services are still alive after 2 or 5 years: what happened to them?

So, regarding London, you can see a lot of people that are starting to be interested in this thing called service design. In the university courses I've been teaching, some of the students are designers, some have a background from other creative industries or ad agencies, some have a business/entrepreneurial background, some come from social sciences. There are many different people interested in moving into this field of service design - which is very different from what it used to be around 15 years ago when the very first ones coined the name and started their agencies. They developed a definition, a practice around service design and when I see people bringing in different backgrounds I can see things changing. So it's interesting to understand what people say service design is and what is not. Those people seem quite successful in attracting clients and establishing business relationships that last a year or two. But what will that lead to?

Marcella Maltese
Senior Experience Designer @ SapientNitro
24 Nov 2015

What is your background?

While being a PSSD student I worked as game designer for an innovation lab at Decathlon which adopted a traditional R&D alongside a more multidisciplinary approach - which I really liked. Right after graduating I worked for Orange: I was responsible for a R&D lab that - again - had to deal with different aspects, from concept development to rapid prototyping on very different projects – interior design, websites, mobile and so on. The most interesting part is how I saw it all changing, from being a very tech-driven engineering hub to a very design-driven hub: during three years the design team got increasingly more relevant than the engineer team thanks to the results achieved by design-lead projects. However, when Orange got acquired the hub has been shut down.

My current position is within SapientNitro which is a very broad agency, able to cover everything, from marketing strategy to app development. It is located all over the world with around 500 people working in the London office only.

How did you see the industry changing?

What happened at Orange has been incredible and lead to many internal debates as you can imagine. Here, as the company is quite big, changes happen more slowly, but for instance the UX and the strategy teams use service design methodologies and to me it means a lot about the innovation culture of this digital agency. Sapient actually was born in the US as an IT agency in early 90's and got merged with a creative agency, Nitro; they've been among the first to actually provide a mix of creative and IT services in a single agency. And it has a very dynamic approach, able to implement new skillsets and provide new services if the market requires it. SapientNitro has now been acquired by Publicis, a big group which includes other agencies like Saatchi & Saatchi, DigitasLBi, Razorfish; the aim of the acquisition is to form the leading digital agency network that can handle a massive range of services end to end – from print campaign to app development – thanks to the wide broad of integrated skills.

I guess it's quite difficult to manage complex projects through different agencies though?

Yes it is and we'll have to uniform processes and workflows in order to do so. However Sapient still is the most relevant in terms of processes for what concerns digital so others will have to adapt to our methodologies.

Which differences do you find from this and consultancies like IDEO or Fjord?

I believe since Accenture acquired Fjord, they became somehow similar to SapientNitro in terms of size and capabilities but there are major differences in the way they became what they are today which forms the company's mindset.

Inside SapientNitro you have two separate groups: the creative team, formed by copyrighters, developers, UX designers and you also have the strategy team which is historically composed by planners and business analysts that work alongside the client, frame the business problem and plan the strategy to solve it. Those people could have both a background in economics or in humanistic studies but they generally tend to lack in the practical skills related to visualising & prototyping solutions since they are not designers. And we are trying to fill this gap now with service designers.

How about public and private clients? I would expect most of the work to be commercial projects for private clients.

Actually one of our biggest clients is the American Government. However, considering London's agency only, we've been working in the healthcare for the British government and we also have been working on projects for local organizations.

Why do your clients usually contact SapientNitro? Which kind of services do they require most?

It usually is either because they have a delivery or they have to solve a specific problem related to the digital world. For instance, a recent client needed support to renew a contract for their server – a very technical problem - but this lead to requesting our assistance also on very different aspects, mostly related to strategy and optimisation of their digital assets as a whole. It's common that our projects start as an IT problem - which is our agency's speciality – and then clients get interested in the wider range of services we can offer them. Most of the time, however, is not them asking for a specific capability, but it's up to us to propose them one of those skills and the impact it could have on their business. There's also an organizational limit: considering the size of the projects, sometimes there are more groups working with the same client and they might not be fully aware about what other groups are working on, hence sometimes they end up following different directions. But that's one of the natural risks for this kind of businesses.

How is a team usually formed here?

The creative group – composed by more than 100 people in our office – is formed by developers, copyrighters, visual, interaction and UX designers. For each of those domains there's an internal organization. For any new project – according to the problem to be solved - people get selected from the various domains and they form a team.

The project I'm working on at the moment, for instance, is very unusual: our client doesn't have an in-house team of designers, hence my team is constantly working for them and alongside them in this on-going partnership. The team is composed by two UX-ers, two interaction designers and a project manager. And since apps are live and they are being constantly improved it is an ongoing project, the length of each stream could vary a lot.

People sometimes refer to UX designers as service designers, sometimes more as UI designers. How's your role as a UX designer?

Again it can change a lot. I believe it is generally an intermediate point among people that speak different languages hence I am often a coordinator of the project. If a visual designer has to focus on the specific level of detail of an interface – pixel sizes, colours ecc – a UX designer has to be in contact with product owners, developers, strategists to provide an uniform direction to the project. Wireframes and sketches are often just a physical, tangible artefact to speak about something abstract, that the team use to evaluate different possibilities and features.

What we do as deliverables are usually low definition and they may integrate some user journey maps, but we usually are not responsible for more detailed elements like user interactions or high definition mockups – those are UI designers responsibilities.

What's the background of strategists here at SapientNitro?

It's interestingly varied: some have a background in anthropology, literature generally people who have been researchers that here form a team called experience strategy. They use all service design methodologies despite not having a practical design background hence, even if being very smart and creative, these people tend to have some difficulties in doing practical things.

That is what I think is happening to service design in general: it feels like it is being diluted in business consulting. A designer knows why he wants to build a prototype, knows what he wants to test and knows that playing and getting his hands dirty enables the possibility to come up with new solutions. This is

something a business consultant doesn't have, and that's why I'm conscious that many call themselves service designers today, but the design and craftsmanship aspect of this work is getting lost.

How do you think is service design going to evolve then?

I see it being transformed into a tool among others. I don't believe it is going to evolve as a discipline itself, due to its collaborative nature. It's more like a mind-set or or a tool and it all depends by what you do with it. To give you an example, typing used to be a job, there was people who called themselves Typists. Today, everyone types, and it is considered a soft skill that all who work in a certain kind of work should learn.

How did you see PSSD being translated to real life scenarios?

I've finished PSSD almost 5 years ago. My feeling was, since it was a very young discipline, it lacked a sort of unifying theory that would have link all the courses and that forced us to reinvent ourselves every time. That is the good and the bad of the course, as I thing the most important thing we learn there is the capability of being flexible, taking risks and keep learning from every projects and every team mate.

It's always quite hard to explain to people PSSD actually is. Among the three core aspects – UX research, business innovation and design – there's a strong focus on sustainability: service design and social innovation have been often strongly related and this is still an important aspect at PSSD.

Well this is all a naming problem since there's a very specific thing called product service system, linked to product cycle development and many of the courses being taught at PSSD are not necessarily related to it. Despite this I'm still very satisfied of my experience within PSSD.

Jason Mesut

Founder @ Resonant Design and Innovation Ltd, ex Head of User Experience @ Plan
24 Nov 2015

What's your background?

I guess I'm not a typical service designer, because my background is mainly in UX design – I studied industrial design that I think taught me design discipline, approaches and processes that have been very beneficial, partially because industrial design goes over thinking about purely digital solutions. Having that background, trying to learn how to apply myself into different areas has been valuable. Equally, I very quickly went into management consulting at PA Consulting, within an IT-based practice background that was pretty good for me, understanding more about business, the commercial side of things as well as bigger IT challenges.

So that gave me very interesting foundations before I went deeper into the user research and experience design. I mean, I've always been interested in that and in my degree course I was thinking already about how to connect products, services and systems when other people were just making nice objects. When I left the management consultancy, I went to Flow Interactive – that later became Foolproof — very much a research-focused agency where I didn't do any project that wouldn't have primary qualitative user research in it. A lot of people say that there are time or budget constraints – but, now, I always find a way to do research. The critical thing is learning how to cut the right corners.

I also spent time in digital agencies in places like DigitalsLBI, and within those projects I did a lot of work in healthcare and financial services: we were taking service level vision across things - whether that was specific aspects of the physical products to digital services channeled through mobile devices, or a whole new digital service.
But I actually left LBi to join a company called "The Team"; they were part of the Loewy Group which included Seymour Powell, an industrial design consultancy/research consultancy, and "The Team" wanted to try bringing this user centered design into all the different work. It didn't quite happen like that: we were involved in projects that were sort of "service design" – for example one of them called "Knowhow", involved Currys' and PC World, and was aimed to create an online service similar to the shops stores experience: we collected a lot of insights but they haven't really been translated into a real vision that worked.

I was also continuing a lot of work I had done in healthcare before I went to RMA Consulting. That was very much related to employee and staff applications: I always believed that in order to create a great customer experience you need to create great employee experiences and thinking about the interactions they have with customers, so I have been very deep on the backstage side of things. When I left there I went to Plan Strategic, a very well respected but pretty unknown design consultancy which is more focused on physical products, design management and product strategy, and I went there to help developing a sort of user experience / service design strategy offering. They did a lot on experience design in physical design language on physical devices and consumer electronics, but they didn't really go into digital services so much. So I worked on a couple of projects there and I'm still working on one of them right now that is a classic service design piece to do with transportation, the sharing economy and services that go across many physical, digital and human touchpoints with a lot of complexity.

I can't say too much about it, but generally is a new transportation service for London: it's been done by an automotive company and they are looking at different ways to move people, not just by owning cars. They are trying to experiment and I'm now leading the project – we did some very interesting, rich research around transportation and prototyping while I was at Plan - but they also have to deal more with the nitty gritty side: bringing that service to life and managing all from call center scripts to email campaigns and marketing. So that's what I'm doing at the moment, aside from an in-car project for another client.

Service design has changed a lot lately. Have you had the same feeling?

I have noticed some change. Years ago I went to some of the service design conferences and I was pretty much annoyed about all the service design things they talked about, but then I went to another one a couple of years later and I thought: "hey what's going on? It has matured!" I think it's finally understanding that those projects take ages to be done and they require a lot of patient and persistence.

It's not about setting up some diagrams and applying this "pretty holistic view".. It's usually way more complex! And it also showed me that actually, the contempt that service design has had with user experience, was getting even more laughable, because actually they were doing digital services. And digital services are exactly what user experience people have been doing! Just because UX has become predominantly about digital, it doesn't mean you don't have to deal with all those system levers.

It was just funny, and it is still funny that those days there's still a separation! I mean both practices are meant to be human centered in some ways and yes, service design tries to look at a broader canvas, but user experience has become this small thing focused on the user interface side. I believe it is just unfortunate because good user experience people are not that at all. But, to be honest, in user experience there's more roles, there's more money to be paid, it's more tangible what can be done with it.

I still want to believe in this wider, holistic view, but I just think it's really hard to do it and it requires a lot more business appreciation and maturity.

I remember asking some service design students that were working on a project how long they thought it would have taken for it to be actually realized and they replied something like "three months, six months maybe..?" But we are talking about a 5-10 years projects! It takes ages! One of the things that I've seen in a single frame of their storyboard was like 10 years worth of work by itself!

However, I've seen more a few clients requesting it. And I've seen also some more recognition in the States where they were they were talking about it as "experience strategy" and design thinking. But it never really got hold as much as service design did, which is more a European focus. So it seems like the US is picking up on those things and as the US market does, they are very good in self-promotion and inflating the value and I guess we will see more of that.

How do you think is this going to evolve, then?

I really don't know about the future. I think there are increasingly more consultancies buying user experience/digital studios. And they want to do more of the bigger system-thinking: when they don't just have UX people, they use some of their business analysts to understand cultural changes - I talk about the Deloitte, Accenture, EY, buying the agencies to try get into that space. And they're the better places to actually do those complex pieces of work because of the relationships they have with the legacy software and with very senior stakeholders.

The real challenge with them is that you have the small design thing at the top - which is almost leading the sexy sell and often doesn't get bought in the project - and the reason they want that is that there's a whole source of systems implementation and support that follows: millions of pounds, years of contracts that follows those ideas. The difficulty is that, if you are in the design part, you can't recommend something that doesn't mean you are going to get all of that later value for the onsell. This is why I do believe in a sort of level of independence as well, where you want to go when you want some sort of independent advice: the thing is that, as a company, I might just want a little bit of work that is cheaper – and that's it. So I think there's a role for independent agencies as well.

There's an opportunity for brand agencies as well and they are trying to fill that space. They can better define which set of product and services a brand might need, but they just have no idea on how to execute it down to the detail. And I think all of them have a role to play.

Digital agencies are huge as well. Companies would come to them because they do the tangible part, but they also probably have got thinkers in there. But when you are a minority within a majority, how do you manage that? Do you try to diffuse those skills across the whole organization? Or do you try to train more people to make more "designers"? Do you make designers out of nothing? There's probably just more demand than supply of good people: I think we need to better educate and diffuse those skills and mindsets into all these organizations and then focus on where we bring the best value. Which is not going to speak about design thinking all the time, or doing the hard work rather than the system thinking! It's a little bit of all of those things and also better communicating these ideas. Coming up with good ideas is not just enough. It's about communicating them brilliantly, engaging people – and we're back in making diagrams again and that's not all bad!

When you show a diagram, a slide, you are selling (and naturally distorting) a confident, clear, robust idea. Even if sometimes it's a lie! We don't know clearly what we are talking about because its "foggy", but at the same time we need to go back to the advertising world and know better as designers how to sell. Selling should be our best asset, as we are communicators. We might not always be the greatest at thinking - as designers we are full of too many ideas - and we might not have the crystal clarity that others have. In order to obtain it though, you need to get rid of the details and focus on the interesting stuff, and sell. And that means being economical with the truth. It's not necessarily lying, it's just – you can't tell the whole story, because that doesn't sell anything. We have to twist data sometimes, like advertising people do – but we also have to do the emotional sell – "big driven insight", "creative ideas"... We can deliver and we can sell it, and I think that the more consulting side of things is learning how to infiltrate organizations' people and convince through "poisoning the water" - or just knowing people's emotional needs and cultural differences. To actually influence people, you need to connect deeply to people's motivation, and that's a consultancy thing! Designers are often too pure to entertain such tactics.

What do you think about social innovation?

Social innovation is interesting. I had a few problems with social innovation: when I used to really dislike service design it was because it was full of people saying "oh we're going to cure world hunger". It was so ethically skewed that it didn't make any sense. I mean, I care about the people and the world where we all live in, but I'm a designer and my mission is not about making the world a better place. I'm being paid by a client that needs to have some results. You need to make sure the client is happy, understanding the market, the needs of people and designing better systems and solutions. But when it comes to users' needs versus business values, then I'll focus on business value. I have to prioritize that: that's me as a designer. I'm not doing exactly what they say but what I do is about giving them something more which goes beyond – and that's the consultancy part. I'm not an artist, I'm not self-expressing. There's too much design and activism going on and it goes against the professionalism that clients need from us.

But sometimes ethic work is used to sell!

Yeah, there's always going to be someone in the organization who wants to do something more meaningful and this makes them feel better. I'm glad to do something that makes people happy, I only say that sometimes you need to prioritize money. Too many people spend their time in this difficult area. As noble as it is - it's just not easily translatable in the commercial world. But for what I look at, all this commercial work can create social impact. Sometimes the social impact is greater, even if less measurable, within that commercial work, rather than in some "design a community" project. For instance, the companies that are being criticized because of selling cars, well I believe that without their contribution our cities would be different, our shops would be different. I know there are bad parts that today got to a point where it is all almost unmanageable, but overall I believe is mostly being positive, through connecting people together.

Another aspect often sold as a deeply ethical business is the healthcare. I remember when I was doing things in healthcare businesses, a peer within the agency who was doing a lot of financial work said to me

"stop making out you are actually better than me because you work in healthcare: it's more corrupted then anything". And he was right! It is still, often, private sector business and individuals trying to make money.

I see people criticizing technology for being anti-human. I don't see anything more human than technology: it's the thing that separates us from other animals. We create technologies that make us better humans by empowering us, amplifying our abilities. The problem designers would have, is to find a way to use those technologies in a good way.

So, I have my own ethics. My problem with the social innovation is that I don't see who's to judge what is good and what is not. And why do they always have to show-off what they do and make the things you do look like they don't matter? Ethics is such a personal thing. And the reality is that most of the people honestly just don't care at all.

Service design is a multidisciplinary discipline and who graduates in service designers has a holistic approach which is often not required by the job market which, instead, prefers specialists. Would you specialise in a single field or would you follow the multidisciplinary path?

One of the common criticisms I make to service design graduates is – how could you tackle things in-depth but holistically? Even though I have not been trained in every discipline, I believe I can actually feel more comfortable managing complex situations because I've gone deeply in a couple of the fields covered by the multidisciplinary service design. There's an interesting key skill that I believe is massively missed, but could be useful to have though: copywriting. I wish I was much better at that! I think it's so important: everything we do is around words and pitches. Being able to convey so much in a word is so valuable!

Could you describe how do service design, design thinking and other overlapping disciplines we've talked about relate to each other?

My feeling is that interaction design itself as a discipline is fundamentally core to service design, and the reason to this is not so much related to the graphic interfaces but actually to the principles around discovery, understanding, comprehension, feedback and flows. Actually you can zoom out to a macro level and we are talking about human to human interaction vs human to computer. That's what interaction design is about: how people think, how people perceive. With interaction design you can adjust that. So in my view we will see more people going from interaction to service design because it is all about designing broader interactions.

How do you see yourself in the future?

I can see it stabilizing. I'm not sure I can see myself in the position of working across multiple projects at the same time – unless I go back working for an organization. I hope it will not be only digital, hope I will get more into physical design – connecting products or whatever they are. I miss a bit my industrial design background, I hope we'll reach a level where we understand when it's appropriate to do that and when it's not. So, I don't know yet clearly what I'll do in the future, I just hope I'll have the chance to do the things I really love to do.

Chiara Cacciani
Product Manager @ Facebook
25 Nov 2015

What is your background?

Product managers come from the widest variety of backgrounds - in my case I studied Communication and Product Service System Design at Politecnico and funny enough I wrote my final dissertation was on social networks business model evolution. Straight after school I spent a year as a design consultant between NYC and Bologna, then moved to a marketing role at Vodafone. Business design is an area that had always fascinated me during my master and I wanted to explore it more. After 3 years as a product marketing manager I had an opportunity to go back to pure product building within Vodafone and I took it, I was then headhunted by Facebook and I became a proper PM. Generally speaking I think Product Service System Design has three "souls": graphic/product design, research, and business design. This breath and variety of inputs is what makes it interesting while studying it but the lack of going deep into an area and develop vertical skills makes it harder once you need to find a job after school. Whoever hires you takes a bet based on your personal brand – it all depends on how good you are at selling yourself, the few working experiences you had been diligent in collecting/exploring and how flexible at adapting and reacting to change you are.

This versatility you are talking about is required by some companies, while most of the times a specialization in a field is preferred. It seems that companies expect this multidisciplinary mind-set to be owned only by experienced people, not by recently graduated professionals.

I dislike blaming the market for lack of opportunities – if you really want something, you work hard, go for it and you are ready for failure, in the long run you'll get there; additionally you should always expect to reinvent yourself. The right question to ask yourself is 'what am I really passionate about to the point I'd like to spend all my energy and time exploring?' Most people who chose to study something so varied tend to not have one unique predominant passion. The framework you adopt then usually is deciding between investing time in something you like and generally you're good at or compensating your weaknesses going for something you lack in. So far I've preferred compensating for my weaknesses instead of playing on my strengths – probably result of the well known impostor syndrome affecting females PMs.
'Numbers' were my weakness I thought I had to make up for, this is why when I thought design consultancy wasn't my thing early on in my career I joint Vodafone and crunched numbers for 3 years before moving back to product development. As PM at Facebook I play on my strengths (that's also a fundamental part of Facebook culture) and this means leveraging my PSSD background to the max – my job consists in asking the right questions to identify a user need, brainstorm and define the set of solutions to quickly test my hypothesis, ultimately go deep in detail product requirements for the product we as a team decided to build.

How do you find yourself working as a Product Manager here?

Facebook is a very special place to work for - as a PM I have my own UX researcher, my own designer and a mind-blowing amount of data on users' behaviours I use as predictors. I ground my hypothesis in qualitative research and data, with my designer we define product specs and prioritize features for the eng team to start building.
The complexity we manage is incredible and super interesting. We run *a lot* of A/B tests - when you have 1.6BN monthly active users you need to be careful when rolling out features, a couple of elements to take into considerations are the network effect and technical limitations. Network effect - If you have a new feature you simply expect your friends to have it as well, especially if the feature relies heavily on a reaction

behaviour; on the other hand there might be products that have perf constrains depending on device model or network capabilities (technical limitations).

The biggest challenge for me is the technical side of the job. Being a PM here is a very technical role, you have to estimate the amount of time and effort required to build a product, you need to be comfortable with the technical jargon and develop a sensibility for it. A Product Manager at Facebook needs to be able to interact effectively with UX researchers, tech guys, data scientists and top management. She's basically a 360 service designer. In tech companies such as Facebook and Google PMs usually come from an engineering background, senior engineer with a passion for product over managing people switch to PM instead of becoming Engeneer Managers. I know a very small number of designers and data scientists who transitioned to PM, not even one UX researcher, UX is extremely focused on writing scripts, talking to people and analysing data with SQL here.

When the recruiter contacted me for this position I initially thought it was some phishing email! Since my dissertation was focused on social networks I had analysed Facebook inside out and I knew PMs generally have an engineering background, I was very surprised they were looking for a former designer.

The structure of this company is very flat - my direct manager is just two levels below Zuck and we often have reviews directly with him. I saw him last week in California! Facebook is very different from Google, which is a larger company. We still are a start-up, 'done is better than perfect' culture. We're roughly 12000 people while Google is probably ten times this size.

Where did your former PSSD colleagues end up working?

I saw PSS designers ending up both in tech-companies and in design consultancies.
Having done it in the early days, my impression is that the work you do in design consultancy is smoke and mirror. You are basically hired only to work on the kick off of a project: mainly the brainstorm and concept creation phase but when it comes to building and testing they pass that task to the client. A company should release products one step at a time, starting from an MVP – a minimum viable product - and then build on top of it. Working in consultancy you simply won't ever get to ship a product or an MVP.

Which trends did you see recently in service design?

Companies are realising they can bring the service design work in-house and consultancies, as a consequence, need to create more tangible value.

On the consultancy side one evolution I found very interesting was to restructure their team around three core areas: 1) business model and strategy 2) what they define as "service design" - which consists in UX/UI work and 3)coding and building the MVP; as well as to have a venture approach – they would own/have shares in every product built, hence an interest in keep improving the product.

Big companies on the other end are applying service design skills more and more internally. Triggered by cost efficiency, they are trying to bring designers in-house building innovation departments that focus mainly on new product development.

Speaking of which, I've recently been to a big, renowned company (IBM ndr) which is building its in-house design thinking department. I realised that the real change that should happen inside the whole company is pretty different to the innovation mind-set seen in small, isolated design thinking departments. We are talking about huge, old companies that could hardly manage any radical change. It requires effort and time.

And an adequate organizational structure! Barilla, for example, is actually changing radically because the innovation department lead is directly underneath the CEO. That is something meaningful. At Vodafone the head of the innovation department wasn't a direct report of the CEO and that did not work. The innovation

hub should be the CEO right-hand. It's a risky bet though - the amount of money you need to invest is much higher then the one you invest in core operations, and the return of investment is not a given at all.
In special companies like Facebook, when you have an idea, you have the opportunity to push it through.We're measured on impact, come up with a good idea, articulate it well and use one of the many internal hackathon we organise, to bring a working prototype to life in a bunch of hours, ready to be tested.
 I met people coming from other tech companies such as Google or Twitter, apparently this special atmosphere is unique; the risk is that it will disappear as we keep growing in size and start feeling the need to introduce processes to get things done. The other special treat is the culture of openness - all employees have total access to a wide range of information, this is very special.

Do you think that not even a leading company like Google is as special as it seems?

I've got many friends working at Google and many pm colleagues coming from there: they all say it's very different in terms of corporate culture. We are still a start-up somehow. The best job at Facebook is being an engineer, you have total autonomy of deciding what you want to work on. For example, last week one of my best engineers left the team because he decided to do a hack-a-month, which means that for a month he can work in a different office on another product and then decide if he wants to join that new team or go back to his old one. A Product Manager can't really do this, you're responsible for a product success you can't leave the team half way through the development. This eng driven culture makes the PM role much more complex, you spend a lot of energy and time to keep a team together.

I find the skill set required to be a successful PM at Facebook very similar to the main traits of a successful service designer.
In both cases you're part of a team and your job is to define what the problem/user need is and how to solve for it. Of course you'll never be alone but you'll work on it with your team.
The value the PM adds is the ability to understand and speak different languages, define priorities and coordinate the execution. You'll have vertical experts across Design, Engineering, Research and Data Analytics who will help you understand what the most impactful thing you can build is, but relies on you to:
1) Define what next steps are to understand the problem/opportunity (Are we looking into data? Are we running a on-field research? Maybe hacking a quick solution and testing it?)
2) Define priorities to execute against the plan effectively
3) Coordinate the work across discipline in the team (design-research-engineering) and with other teams when there is an area of overlap or simply you'll be touching their code.
This multidisciplinary aspect is the fun part of the job as well as what it makes it so similar to service design, because you'll find yourself sometimes playing the researcher role sometimes the graphic designer one and so on.

My personal "wow - moment" was short after I joint Facebook as product manager realising that was the most accurate implementation in the real world of what I had studied as a product service system designer!

Joel Bailey
Director @ Livework UK, Founder @ Strategic Design Resourcing
5 February 2016

What is your background?

I became a service designer as an untrained service designer – I'm not a designer at all actually. I worked for a period in digital where I have been in charge of a large team of people creating content for a government website. That was one of my roles.. The concept was very important: design how we make people get to the content so they could understand it and they could act on it. Increasingly I started having bigger roles within the website, having conversations with the government department as they wanted me to write the content differently first, and then they realised they also wanted me to change the regulations behind it. I quickly found myself doing service design and I realised that the best way to approach the problem was working on some user research to work out how to better meet users' needs - and get them to do the things we want them to do, as the government needs to get the behaviours of citizens to take actions.

I came to service design purely because I recognised that my job was all about behaviours and I realised that the best way to do that was understanding the customers: working with them and for them.
But my career started about sixteen years ago and I had very different roles: I have been Director of service design at Capita for about five years and before that I worked for agencies, I worked as a contractor consultant, for management consultancies: I had a very broad career, working with different types of clients and organizations.

Then in the last year I was contracting – getting a lot of calls and messages about service design jobs – but most of the people that were contacting me didn't really understand what they were recruiting. Prior to that, I tried to recruit a team for Capita and got a very poor experience outsourcing at the recruitment market: they didn't know what I was talking about! They didn't really understand service design - and to be honest they weren't even ready to understand it, because the whole HR recruitment module is about volume. You get a bunch of young people to contact professionals with roles –and those who do UX design recruit UX designers only – but they don't even need to know much more about it. As the service designer area is still quite young, I desired to invest in it.

I have a friend of mine who happens to run a digital and marketing recruitment business – we were at a drink one day and I mentioned this and we agreed on the opportunity and we set that up. People get better opportunity for service design jobs and we can help clients who got frustrated because they have not been able to get these talents. We've been doing this for about one year now and it is going pretty well. That's sort of my story in a nutshell.

Which are the main clients requesting service design among the public and private sector in the UK?

Within the private sector the demand is fragmented. There are a couple of main areas: financial services are a big buyer at the moment – even if I'm not sure they are using it pretty well; then I think any commodified service provider – and by that I mean a service provider who cannot compete on products, like gas or electricity companies where prices are heavily regulated. They use service design to differentiate. There are quite a few people that run product businesses that want to become service businesses and retain relationships with their clients. You also have agencies – brand, marketing, digital particularly – are trying to diversify through service design because their clients are asking for it. This is all within the private sector.

Public sector is really interesting – I spent one year of my career working around local governments – and it has become pretty much about GDS – government digital services. I believe they still talk about service design and try to follow service design principles but I think they are still pretty much about creating web content whereas I believe there is a very huge opportunity in multichannel service design to redesigning the proposition of governments. For instance, someone could probably do a very good job in reimagining how to

do business rates or how you transact when buying a home: several things that needs to be reinvented just from a regulator point of view. GDS are doing that but within the whole government you have departments - like ministry of justice and so on - and they all are trying to build that service design capabilities, but they are doing it without a very clear method and that probably just need to evolve.

In your experience what are service designers' background?

Service design is still very young and it still covers a broad source. As a service designer you can have a lot of backgrounds. And increasingly I've seen prepared people having qualifications in service design and service innovation, like the European Institute or the service design course at RCA. But still the majority of people haven't been trained at it so you have a lot of people from a design practice - like industrial design, product design or sometimes graphic design - they know how to take a good brief in graphic design, and that is quite useful in service design.

I also find the most interesting people don't call themselves service designers and are arguably doing something very similar are those who have an engineering background in service business – because if you think about it an engineer gets the whole idea of upstream and downstream, the idea of blueprints and so on.. I believe they get it intuitively and in some ways they can do it better because they are willing to go to a level of detail most designers don't go to. I'd like to see more of them coming in, anyway.

How would you describe the relationship between service design, strategic design, design thinking?

To me it's all applying design to service businesses. That's the topline view I have. Service businesses make the large bulk economy these days and that's an important thing to focus on. Design is a discipline that has very interesting approach and whether that's "design thinking" or "design doing", I don't really care. We were discussing about this at the RCA's LiveWork book's presentation.

My personal view on this is we called our company "Strategic Design Resourcing" because I think we are moving beyond service design to a point where all of it will grow up, where service design, user experience design, product design, packaging design, interior design, restaurant design.. All forms of design will need to be orchestrated within the service businesses and once you do it really well, do it all in one, so every form of design could best impact on the customer experience. You know, everyone is talking about Apple: they take care about every single touchpoint, whether it's in a store – you are talking to an individual who comes up to you and serves you where you are, or the packaging of products you buy. Or, if we consider Amazon, how they designed the way you return a product. They infused design from the top-down and that for me is what strategic design is about. Some people define it as tackling bigger challenges and problems – I think that's true as well – there are some wicked problems that need strategic design in the sense that they need someone who thinks strategically on a long term.

Between an agency where teams are formed up by specialists, and one formed by "hybrid" people who have a holistic overview of the projects, what would you choose and why?

I think it's useful to have different things at different stages in the process. Generally, at Livework, everybody is a holistic service designer and everybody therefore does research, does design and creates material. Maye once you get into the creation phase you need to bring in an interaction designer, or a UX or a product designer. At the moment we are working on a agile project, which is divided in sprints: there's an interaction designer which is contracting, helping us coding a prototype so we can put it in the field to test it - and he's working remotely. Those roles don't necessarily need to be part of the core team. It depends by which stage you are working on and what the client is asking for. Increasingly they want to see what is being built while you do the design work. I like that approach but I just think it brings in a slightly different shaped thing.

Social innovation work and service design for commercial projects: do those two worlds have any point in common or they should just take two different directions?

I don't think so, a good designer could put the skills to either challenge: some part of the social design work – the canvas you are working on is longer term and probably more strategic because more intangible has lot of indirect benefits. "How can we make an impact in this quarter or in this business cycle?" in social design is "how can we reduce this problem in the next three years?" hence it's quite similar. You often need to have a longer view with commercial work, but the way social policy works, tends to be about convincing the regulator or some philanthropic organizations to invest in a change that takes a lot longer and is more difficult. I hope social design can have a bit more of impact because I think it's great, I tried to do some myself over the years. But a lot of social design impacts only at a local level and local governments are impossible to get into in these days, because there is no money. There are specific agencies only focused on those spaces but I think it's quite a hard job.

How do you think service design will evolve in the next few years?

It's very hard to know what will happen in the future! I think we might go through a period where there's going to be a lot of bad design contaminating the service design practice.

You have different ways of working, different cultures and practises bashing up against each other: the management consultancies way of work has its own culture and a totally different view about where value comes from compared to a service design perspective which is much more user centric, iterative and generally more agile. That's going to take ages to settle – hopefully good design will prevail getting through this upcycle, avoiding trust despondencies because it has liven up to its hopes. So I'm hopeful we'll get through that and we'll get to the other side: there are good and bad aspects but at least we now have realistic expectations. My fear though is that we end up going down the road of system thinking as a method to trust to do everything and I don't think that's true at all.

Dominic Burton
Service Designer @ Livework UK
9 March 2016

What is your background?

I studied industrial design at Brunel almost 7 years ago and whilst doing some of the projects I've worked on, I realised I got frustrated because I couldn't really solve the challenge I was trying to, as things needed to change beyond the product. I think I've walked through service design even if I used to call it system design. I ended up doing a research aimed at making housing more sociable: looking for some wider inspiration I found out about social innovation - that lead me quite quickly to service design.

During the last year I got quite excited about service and social innovation and I tried to make my final year project include some service elements: I worked on one project for the "Royal National Institute for Deaf People" about how to remanufacture old hearing aids they no longer used so that they can be used in developing countries. I spent part of the time thinking on how to deliver the service, but as I was still doing product design I had to add an element of product in the project anyway. When I finished my degree, I decided I wanted to work in the service and social innovation area: it was 2009 and service design was already existing.

Interestingly, when I was doing my Master's degree there was very little literature to refer about - the only thing I found about service design was a small chapter inside the "Designing Interaction" book by Bill Moggridge. When I graduated I did an internship at Livework, I've been doing some freelance work for a year and a half and then I started working with Livework in 2011 and I've been here since then.

How did you find the service design industry changing in the last few years?

I think the market has got a lot more mature. It comes in waves: there was a time when everyone was interested in doing workshops and processes - now there's a trend towards digital with GDS (Government Digital Service) and big banks wanting to become digitally focused.

Definitely in the last year market has picked up a lot and it seems like there's much more opportunities for service designers; consultancies got a lot more busy in the last year - and I think it is probably also a trend to integrate the "business thinking" into design agencies. I don't know whether that is driven by the market or consultancies realising that designers were not having the impact they wanted because they didn't have that business understanding, but it's definitely been in the last three or four years a big focus.

How would you describe the difference between user experience and service design?
Some of the experienced UX designers I've been speaking with, think service design is just a different terminology being used to describe what they've already been doing for years.

I think there are probably different types of UX designers and probably, unfairly, UX and UI got lumped together in one thing, hence UX has started to be focused on digital solutions only.

Actually, part of the projects service design agencies work on is about digital transformation...

Yes, but if you think about a balance, a centre of gravity, UX is probably closer towards implementation or building stuff while we rarely get to the stage of building a website or what an actual user is going to see. We are much on a higher upstream, which is about the strategy, user needs and so forth. We rarely ever deliver a functioning website, while I think a UX designer would be expected to work with developers and actually produce this website. I think at the beginning Livework did that a lot more - probably some service design company still do that, while we usually have partners and we take care about the service strategy.

Speaking about service design with people coming from different background, it seems like everyone is talking about the same topic but they actually don't.
The reason is probably to be referred to the multiple backgrounds of service design itself - like marketing, design and management - causing it to struggle to find its very own identity.
How do you see it going to evolve?

It will continue to mature I think. I wouldn't say it's struggling, I believe it's just a new discipline, a new field. As more people will start working on it and developing more perspectives, it becomes more mature. Maybe it will have a clearer, focused identity as now it feels like it's getting amends all the times.
But it seems to be picking up in the US; when I started, it was rarely mentioned in the US where clients were very focused on the UX. Now they sort of expect you to speak about service design.
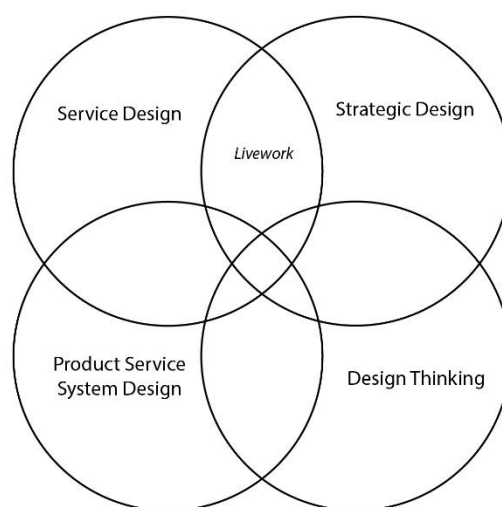
So I think it'll probably develop further on: maybe the scope will broad or maybe it will shrink, we don't know yet. It might even broad more to include some more strategic. And, probably, the trend of big companies developing in-house service design departments will continue. At the beginning here we had a lots of projects with "telcos", but it started to dry out: that's probably because they are starting to develop their own in-house capabilities. They have less of a need for consultancies.
Maybe we'll also work more with "smes" (small-medium enterprises and companies). I think we would be valuable to them as they don't have the capabilities already in-house.

What you found out about the different vision about service design is true. I also had my specific view before joining Livework and I had no specific training in service design. Than that got combined with the collective of Liveworkers, but probably, internally, you still have different views about what service design is.

Considering the academic descriptions of Product Service System Design, how would you sketch a venn diagram which represents the relationship among service design, strategic design, PSSD and design thinking?

Strategic design and service design are quite related and they definitely partially overlap. I believe LiveWork is located in this "intersection". I think you could do service design focusing more on how you realise the service and environment: service design would mean focusing more on the implementation and less on the strategic - which is what strategic design is about in my opinion.

PSS is obviously product and service related. You probably are doing something similar to service design whereas sometimes you might be focused more on the product and sometimes more on the service.. And then you have design thinking, which seems to be in a way becoming less popular all the time: I think it's just a way of thinking - and sort of selling design to business. There's probably a bit of design thinking in all of them.

How is it like for you to work as a service designer?
Your profile description says you "do some user interviews in the morning, some concepts in the afternoon and then some coding in the night". Is it actually this much multidisciplinary?

It varies a lot depending on which project you are working on, but I was literally doing a user research interview this morning! Yes, it's quite varied: lots of meetings, spending a bit of the time in the office.. I've been doing a project recently with GP (General Practice) surgery and I had to go up to Manchester to work in different surgeries with them. And then there's a part of work which is about involving businesses – it might be writing articles or similar activities.

Livework Rotterdam has both business and service designers. In terms of role and responsibilities, what are the differences?

We don't have any business designer in London. Maybe some service designer would cover that role. It depends by what you mean by business design: probably they would be more competent in framing things and thinking more about how a business would adopt solutions. We often work with clients who define the business-side elements. For the project I'm doing at the moment, we offered them to do it by ourselves but then they decided they would take care about the business-side and we would focus on customer-related things. It's hard to break the two apart really.

Only Livework and a few similar agencies adopt a purely multidisciplinary approach which requires professionals capable of managing different aspects of a project, while bigger agencies prefer hiring specialists: UI designers, UX researchers, strategists etc.

I think some companies do divide things down to specific roles, but we tend to take the approach where we have small project teams and the team will stay with the project for the entire duration. We would start with the research, then continue with the ideation, the prototyping and the entire thing. And it seems to work well. We have quite content - intense projects and a lot of knowledge would need to be transferred when working on team with specific activities and roles. But I can see how it might make sense to divide more if you are a bigger company.

In London, during the past few years, service design and social innovation became two separate worlds. How did it happen?

I think there are two types of social innovation approaches. The one taken into account by the public sector - which is quite strong at the moment - and the more "pure" social innovation – which is the space where charities and social enterprises work. There's been quite a lot of service design focus in that areas – including a few companies that unfortunately don't exist anymore like Participle or ThinkPublic. I think it is difficult to get funding, specially when there are not many investments around and people are focusing more on delivering standard services rather than trying to innovate. But I think a lot of people do want to work in that area, it's quite popular. Livework would be interested in that area, there are just not too many projects. And there's a lot of public-sector work around it anyway.

One thing somebody told me some years ago about social innovation that I believed changed a bit my view was related to how you could make a valuable contribution even doing commercial. Contributing to the middle class is important and actually creates positive impact. And that was quite a different perspective to me.