

Mapping and developing Service Design Research in the UK

DANIELA SANGIORGI | ALISON PRENDIVILLE | AMY RICKETTS

3 — Service Design Practice in UK Exemplars

Service Design Research is increasingly looking into how service designers actually work and assess their impact within and for organisations and communities. During the three SDR workshops, case study presentations illustrated how service design agencies are already differentiating themselves through specialisation and modes of practice and this needs be taken into account and further investigated (see case studies at pages 23-27).

Looking closely into the exemplars of service design practice, there are clear differences in the levels and kinds of relationships design agencies are developing with their clients, as well as the kinds of projects and issues they are dealing with. This diversity is a reaction to the changing demands and increasing design awareness of the market. It is also a manifestation of the natural development of some of the young agencies operating in this sector, moving from an operational to a more strategic role for service innovation. Here we discuss our insights into the levels of design interventions, kinds of design projects, agency-client relationships and design issues.

Design interventions

One way to distinguish Service Design practices is by considering the level of the design intervention within a service system. Some agencies and service design projects focus on the redesign of experiences or touchpoints (i.e. Experience based Co-design case study), whilst other projects work towards developing new service models (i.e. Participle case study), introducing new strategies and innovation approaches. Latterly, there is also engagement in Policy Making, to inform legislation in a specific service sector (i.e. Snook case study). Some agencies work across this spectrum, and with time they tend to move from experience re-design towards more transformational projects.

Similarly Chris Downs in his presentation of Method (digital service design agency, see case study page 27), mapped design work against a matrix: he distinguished existing agencies working at a strategic level ('Design as Strategy'), at an implementation level ('Design as Production'), or considering their object of design between delivering "branding and marketing", or "services, products and systems" solutions. By positioning different design work across this map, he highlighted how each design agency develops its own unique approach.

Design projects

The range of observed design strategies also evidences the kinds of projects designers are working on. Some agencies specialise in, for example behavioural change projects (i.e. UScreates case study), thereby privileging to work with and within communities for local authorities, third sector or NHS Trusts. These kinds of projects differ from interventions introduced for the re-design of existing service provision, both within the public or private sector. Here issues relating to service and organisational change differ significantly from the ones connected to social change. Finally, increasingly designers are working towards the setting up of new ventures, predominantly social enterprises, as a way to create completely new and hybrid service models, to meet contemporary complex needs of the population. Setting up a new business again raises totally new challenges from the ones related to changing an existing organisation or supporting behavioural change.

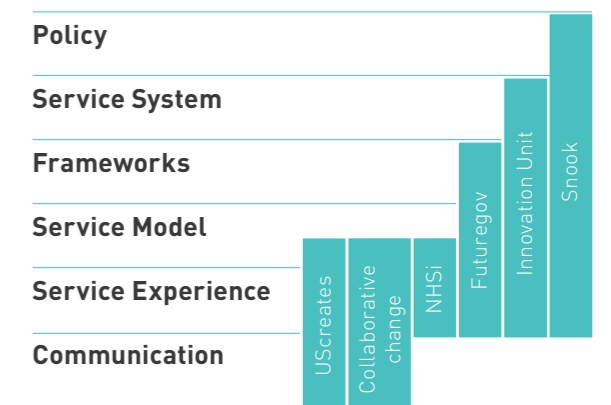
Agency-Client relationships

As a further development, service designers have moved beyond the traditional client-design consultancy relationship. The Restarting Britain 2 report, presented by Jocelyn Bailey (Policy Connect, page 16) illustrated the existence of different models of collaboration characterising the work of design agencies for the public sector (page 22). Similarly Sarah Drummond of Snook (see case study page 23), summarised their work in three main categories: 1) Inside, for when they work to embed design in organisations; 2) Inside - Outside, when they work as traditional agencies, to do consulting work and skills building; 3) Outside, when they work to set up new ventures.

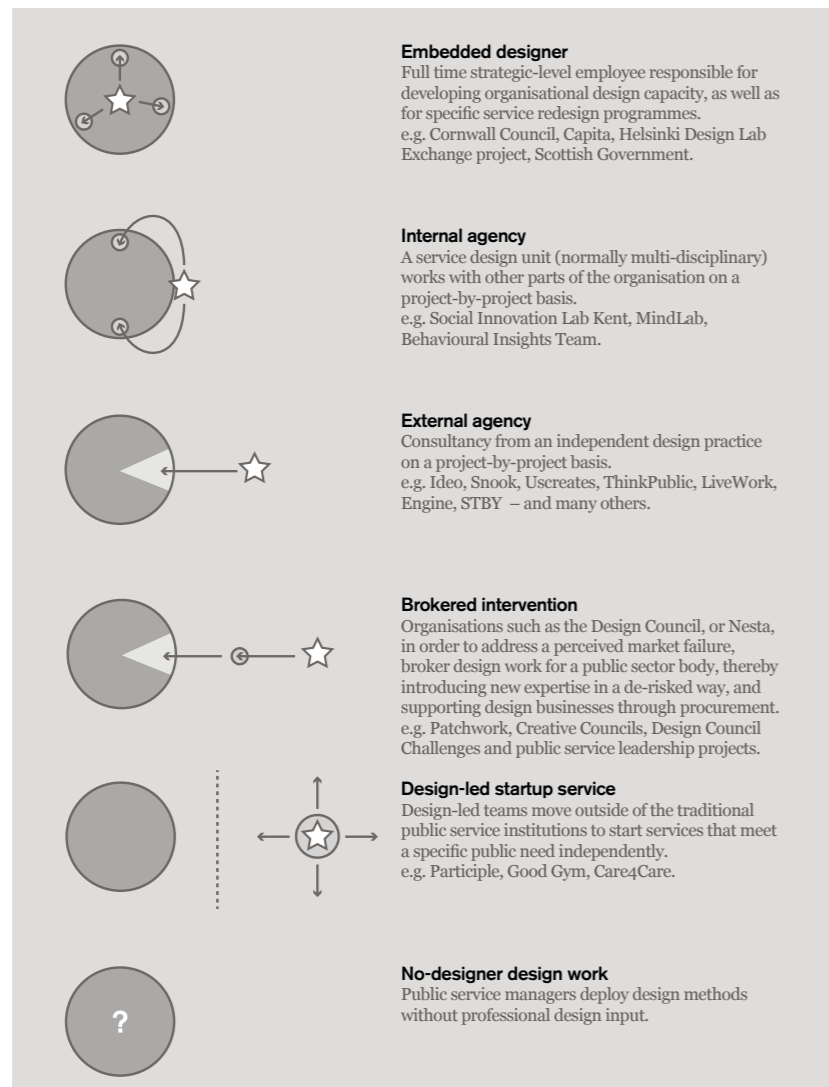
Design Issues

During Workshop 02 discussion focused on the issues design agencies face when working within existing systems (service re-design), within communities for social change or when working outside the system to set up a new venture. During this workshop particular attention was given to understanding: "How Service Design can be better implemented, embedded, measured and scaled up." Here we report on the issues that emerged during the presentations and the discussions within the Network.

- 1. Implementation issues:** the main needs and challenges of implementing service design solutions, working with and within existing organisations or communities were related to the need to collaboratively scope each project, handling complexity, transferring skills, and engaging the right people from the start; when setting up new ventures, emphasis was on how to iteratively generate, adapt and develop sustainable business models;
- 2. Embedding issues:** embedding design skills and approaches within organisations requires context and process sensitivity; it also requires better definition of what designers do that is different from other human centred approaches or other professions; the importance of distinguishing between 'designing' and 'designers,' to fully appreciate existing competencies and designing skills in organisations and communities, was emphasised, whilst clarifying the specific role and contribution of professional designers. Finally embedding design approaches needs to consider measurement issues and differences in language and professional cultures that can prevent collaboration;



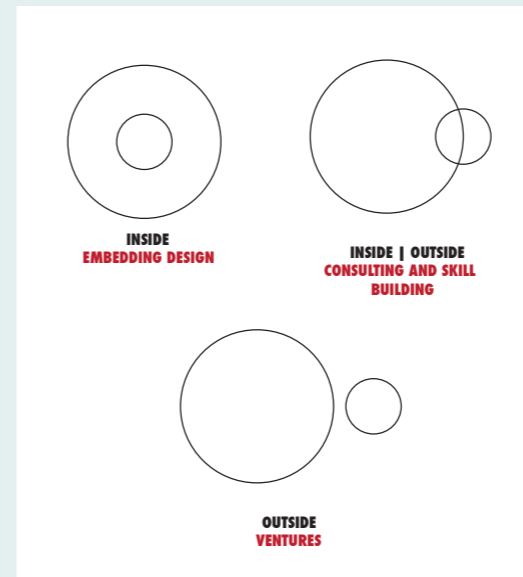
Levels of Design interventions for Public Services (source: Sangiorgi, forthcoming)



Restarting Britain 2: Design and Public Services, Design Commission 2013

3. **Scaling issues:** scaling up a solution or a design approach requires some form of customisation and adaptation. As an example, when scaling up their enterprises Participle added a ‘scoping’ phase and a costing mechanism, to better develop solutions that could be implemented in different contexts with different needs. Similarly scaling up a design approach, like the Experience-based Co-design within healthcare organisations, raises the question of what can be standardised and simplified and what original qualities need to be preserved. Furthermore, how can the open ended and creative approach of the innovation phase be balanced with the service delivery and management phases and teams? Finally it is about adapting and constantly developing the original business and financial models for the scaling up of start-ups and local enterprises;

4. **Measuring issues:** measuring service design outcomes and processes raises the dilemma of reconciling the art vs science mindset and approaches. Integrating economic and quantitative measurements with more qualitative and social value metrics is fundamental, as designers need to gain credibility while acknowledging that their value cannot be captured with only quantitative and measurable criteria. Participle, by developing a way to measure what they call ‘capability’, demonstrates the need and importance of combining both metrics in order to speak with Councils. Speaking a similar language and enabling convergence of diverse professional cultures is key to enhancing Design’s use.



Models of intervention



Inside | Outside | On the Edge: Lean Startup and Public Sector
Sarah Drummond

Sarah Drummond from Snook, a Scottish service design agency, gave an overview of their work with and for public sector organisations. She has identified three main models of interventions described as: Inside (or Embedding Design); Inside-Outside (or consulting and skill building) and Outside (Ventures). Each of these models has their own benefits and difficulties, which relate to the overall issue of sustainability and impact of design interventions.

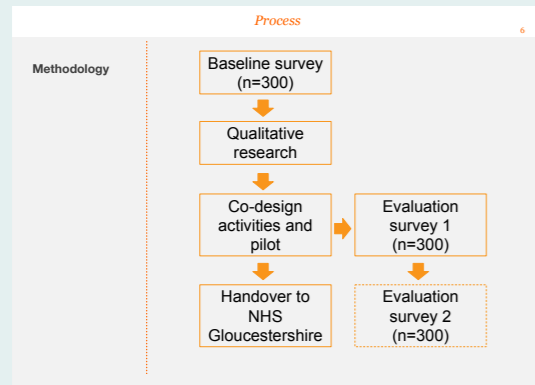
The Inside-Outside approach resembles the more traditional model of consultancy, which struggles with longer-term implementation and skills transfer, whilst benefiting from clarity of objectives and contributions.

“Exploring the skills gap for designers to work at these different levels and the ways in which these different approaches can become complementary to each other to achieve a bigger impact, provide interesting areas of potential research...”

Sarah Drummond, 27 June 2013

The Inside approach has a longer term perspective and empowering agenda within the organisation, but struggles with crossing the skills gap and dealing with the longer time frameworks, which is unusual for designers. Finally the Outside approach has more freedom and agility in its intervention, but suffers from issues of scalability, market readiness and integration within the existing systems.

Exploring the skills gap for designers to work at these different levels and the ways in which these different approaches can become complementary to each other to achieve a bigger impact, provide interesting areas of potential research.



Methodology and process

Design for Social Change Mary Rose Cook and Katie Collins

Collaborating with Katie Collins (University of the West of England), Mary Rose Cook from Uscreates, a design agency specialising in social change projects, has been focusing on behavioural change. Presenting a research project for a very deprived neighbourhood in Gloucester, they were asked to propose solutions that would deter people from becoming alcohol dependent. Instead of designing more leaflets, which would be inappropriate and probably ineffective, they were inspired by participatory research methods to work with people in the neighbourhood and to give them the power to inform them how to go about trying to solve the problem.



The Podsmobile

How do we empower people to co-design projects when they might not be experts and “they might not know what options there are to work with?”

Katie Collins, 22 October 2013

A base line survey was conducted with 300 residents in order to start the co-design activities. Stakeholder workshops were also set up to bring together local organizations within the community together – charities, police, volunteers, and local alcohol organisations. Method stations were also set up across the area, inviting different residents and community groups to come and work with them to understand how they could best interact with the community. It became apparent that the local people did not want paper scripts or to talk with lots of different people. They did not want a formal research process. Consequently people were interviewed in pubs. Case studies were documented and visualized and four were extracted that best represented the different experiences within the theme of alcohol dependency. These provided the structure for the co-design events that followed. From the co-design events, approximately 40 recommendations were made including a podmobile, which would visit areas and engage with local people which was seen as one of the biggest barriers. The vehicle was to provide services lacking in the area and included interventions such as an engagement day, careers and money day, a young people and families day and a mental and physical health day. A street café was also set-up, which provided the residents with something that would encourage them to leave their houses and have tea with their neighbours.

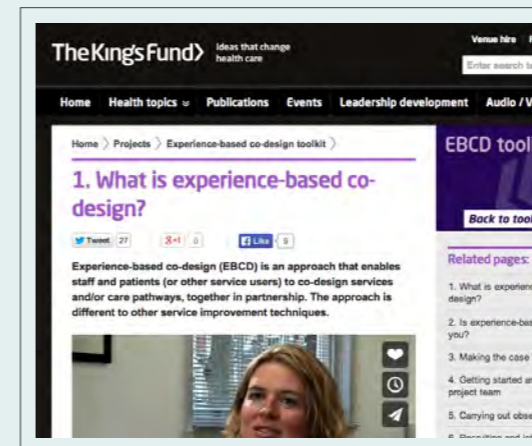
uscreates
the strategic consultancy
delivering social value



Emotional Journey Map as used during a co-design workshop to re-design an acute hospital service in the south of England (Bate and Robert: 2007b)

Experience-based Co-design Glenn Robert

In 2011/12, as an evolution of the Experience-based Co-design (EBCD) approach that was first piloted in 2005/06, a free-to-access online toolkit for health care practitioners was developed in collaboration with the Kings Fund. Then in the summer of 2013, partly with the aim of evaluating the usefulness of the toolkit to practitioners, an international online survey was conducted. The survey found 57 implementations of the EBCD approach with projects in the UK, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand. Respondents to the online survey reported very significant patient & carer involvement in the EBCD approach but specific weaknesses were the highly variable levels of staff engagement, and the approach being too time consuming. Whilst respondents reported the value of exploring in much more depth the nature of patient experiences (resonating with narrative medicine approaches), the survey results (and follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of respondents) suggested implementing ‘co-design’ was much more challenging.

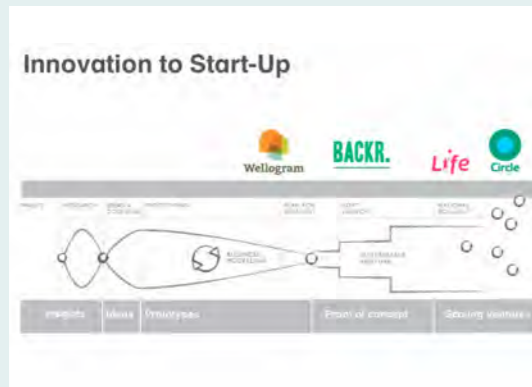


King's Fund online EBCD toolkit

“The question remains of whether the evolution of the approach over the last 10 years has led to the loss of the unique value designers can bring to these types of projects...”

Glenn Robert, 22 October 2013

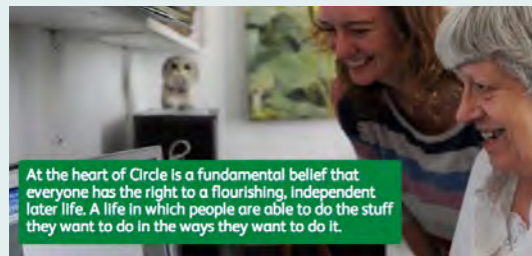
In response to feedback that the approach was too time-consuming a National Institute for Health Research project explored whether using an existing collection of videos of patients talking about their experience of illness – healthtalkonline – could trigger the co-design process. This accelerated form of EBCD (AEBCD) was tested in two intensive care units and two lung cancer services. This proved to be much quicker, and resulted in similar types of service improvement. However, the question remains of whether the evolution of the approach over the last 10 years has led to the loss of the unique value designers can bring to these types of projects.



Innovation to Start-up process



Circle is a membership-based service open to anyone over the age of 50, supporting individuals and communities to lead the lives they want to lead.



At the heart of Circle is a fundamental belief that everyone has the right to a flourishing, independent later life. A life in which people are able to do the stuff they want to do in the ways they want to do it.

Circle project

Design for New Ventures Jennie Winhall

Jennie Winhall presented a Participle project in collaboration with Southwark Council, the Department of Work and Pensions, and Sky Media that was about designing better solutions for an ageing population.

For this project they spent time with about 140 older people, understanding their relationships with their families and what they wanted and what they wanted their life to be in the future. This gave a number of insights: i.e. a large number of people were actually skipping the third age; most of the councils were cutting the kinds of services that are more social, while people who were doing better in later life were those people with good social connections; also many families were living at a distance from their older relatives and wanting to support their grandparents or their parents from that distance. After many iterations they ended up with an idea of a membership organisation called Circle for the third age, that gives access to a network of neighbourhood helpers, all of which have different skills, and access to the range of social events that are designed and organised by members themselves. It is entirely demand driven and run through neighbourhood helper networks with the help of a very smart CRM system that organises the tasks, the jobs and the events.

“The biggest success for Circle is that we have managed in some way, to change the social care market in UK, as many of the local authorities across the country, who are putting out new tenders for their older people’s service, are now doing it on a Circle model.”

Jennie Winhall, 22 October 2013

To date they have rolled Circle out to different locations based on an initial scoping phase and they have measured all the activity. They measured something they call “capability” meaning whether people are building new social connections, if they are nurturing them, if they are learning new skills, and continuing to use those new skills; also whether they are making a contribution to the community. This has been very interesting to the Department of Health, the Office of National Statistics, and useful when they bid for a new tender.



Method design values



Method iteration cycle

Digital Service Design Chris Downs

As one of the first UK Service Design Practitioners, Chris Downs from Method described his career history to demonstrate the evolving field of Service Design and its relationship with the digital.

Training as a Product Designer, Downs embarked on his professional career designing for the web and then formally training as an Interaction Designer. With Ben Reason and Lavrans Løvlie Live|Work was founded as the first Service Design consultancy in the UK. The agency started partly as a result of their expertise being in transition between product and interaction design and also due to a reluctance to design stuff that would end in landfill; instead their focus became designing experiences.

“It is too easy to pigeonhole the digital as one thing and Service Design as another. All agencies have subtle differences.”

Chris Downs, 27 January 2013

Downs described Method in the UK as a multidisciplinary design agency that grew out of the famous graphic design agency Meta-Design in San Francisco; it employs a range of disciplines, creative directors, software developers, coders, strategists and interaction designers. Presenting the landscape of design agencies, he explained that it was too easy to pigeonhole the digital as one thing and Service Design as another. For him there are subtle differences in all design agencies with some of them positioning themselves in the digital design world, placing an emphasis on production, whilst there are those that see themselves as strategists, looking for new business opportunities.

For Downs, Service Design methods offer a way of collaborative working that break down the silos between the different disciplines. Working through a number of examples he showed the changing working practices that moved Method from a service orientated digital product agency that just cared about the digital end product, to a group that is now beginning to see design as a way of working together collaboratively to solve problems and communicating how they work as part of their pitch to the client; as well internally developing a more reflective design practice. Importantly, Method no-longer separate product, service and brand in their design approach as customers do not care about the different elements but see it as one.

Edited by

Daniela Sangiorgi, Alison Prendiville and Amy Ricketts

With contributions from

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www.servicedesignresearch.com/uk

This report organises the Network's materials to give an overview of Service Design Research in the UK, with its key research themes and sectors, and discusses the nature and challenges of Service Design practice.

In the last section the report offers twelve short pieces by a range of academics, experts and practitioners who have participated in the Network, reflecting on possible future directions and challenges for Service Design research. In our conclusions we bring together all these considerations to offer key recommendations for academics, practitioners, funding agencies, innovation and design bodies as well as design commissioners. We hope this work represents an effective platform to consolidate and develop further the SDR UK community and its links with the international scene.

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