



PROOF OF CONCEPT

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Service Design Proof of Concept. Proceedings of the ServDes.2018 Conference
Editors: Anna Meroni, Ana María Ospina Medina, Beatrice Villari

ServDes.2018

*Service Design Proof of Concept
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Editors:

Anna Meroni

Ana María Ospina Medina

Beatrice Villari

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ABOUT SERVDES . 2018

Service Design can no longer be considered an ‘emerging discipline’. Though recent and in continuous evolution, it is now consolidated enough to be assessed and reviewed in terms of effectiveness and impact on economy and society: how far has the logic of services (and of Service Design culture) influenced the different domains of innovation and value creation? How much has this been truly integrated into the innovation process of private and public sectors? How effectively has this been understood, evaluated and discussed? How far have digital technologies and media been influencing service design and delivery?

Initially, Service Design mainly concentrated on the paradigm shift from designing the materiality of objects to focusing on immaterial experiences, interfaces, interactions, and strategies. Thus, for some decades attention has been paid to the changing role and competencies of the designer, and to the establishment of Service Design as a discipline in its own right, despite its multi-disciplinary approach which includes management, ethnography, sociology, and organizational studies, to mention but a few.

The ServDes.2018 conference aimed at validating, discussing and reviewing the models, processes and practices developed and used in the service design ecosystem, from its academic community to practitioners, companies and organizations at large.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pg.

Track 1: Learning and practicing

Learning and practicing in service design Alessandro Deserti, Anna Meroni, and Bas Raijmakers	1
The briefing process: Examining the client-consultant relationship through a case Begüm Becermen, Esben Grøndal and Amalia De Götzen	13
Desis Network: Strategies to advancing systemic social innovation through service design Carla Cipolla	25
Learning to design in public sector organisations: A critique towards effectiveness of design integration Stefan Holmlid and Lisa Malmberg	37
Fostering a sustained design capability in non-design-intensive organizations: a knowledge transfer perspective Filipe Lima and Daniela Sangiorgi.	49
Service design for behavioural change - current state of the discipline and practice in India Ravi Mahamuni, Pramod Khambete and Ravi Mokashi-Punekar	62
The designer as agent of community Thomas Østergaard	76
From user-centred to stakeholder oriented service design: Implications for the role of service designers and their education based on an example from the public sector Lorenz Herfurth and Kirsty Sinclair	91
Working with complexity: A contemporary skill framework for service designers Tamami Komatsu Cipriani and Martina Rossi.	105
The satellite applications catapult: Design's contribution to science and technology innovation services Alison Prendiville.	117
Navigating the sociocultural landscape in service design Laura Santamaria, Carolina Escobar-Tello and Tracy Ross.	131
Exploring the future of consumer retail Jim Budd, Paul Della Maggiora and Florian Vollmer.	152
A designerly-way of conducting qualitative research in design studies Nina Costa, Lia Patrício and Nicola Morelli.	164
Making sense of data in a service design education Amalia de Götzen, Péter Kun, Luca Simeone and Nicola Morelli.	177
Put on your oxygen mask before helping others: Mental well-being in service design Anne Dhir.	189
The future of visual communication design is almost invisible or why skills in visual aesthetics are important to service design Mark Roxburgh and Jemima Irvin.	199
Bodystorming: Lessons learnt from its use on the classroom Aguiinaldo Santos, Aline Muller Garcia, Milena Carneiro Alves and Emanuela Lima Silveira.	216

Service design in companies Linda Covino and Alessandro Piana Bianco	227
A service design experiment in the Municipality of Turin to overcome organisational silos	230
The Designers Italia project - building the community of public services designers Alessandro Deserti, Francesca Rizzo	234

Track 2: Sharing and collaborating

Sharing and collaborating in service design Marta Corubolo, Daniela Selloni, and Anna Seravalli	237
Service co-design for the shared mobility sector: A free-floating bike sharing model Silvia Cacciamatta, Francesca Foglieni and Beatrice Villari.	252
Adapting the design process for different learning styles and abilities Valerie Carr.	266
Analysis on the utilization of co-design practices for developing consumer-oriented public service and policy focusing on the comparison with western countries and south korea Yoori Koo and Hyeonseo Ahn	281
Tools for collaborating and interacting in living labs Maximilian Perez Mengual, Julia M. Jonas, Stephanie Schmitt-Rueth and Frank Danzinger.	298
Civic engagement as participation in designing for services Lara Salinas, Adam Thorpe, Alison Prendiville and Sarah Rhodes.	311
Co-creation with vulnerable consumers – an action research case study of designing a pictorial language for logistics Stephanie Schmitt-Rüth, Martina Simon, Andreas Demuth, Alexandra Kornacher, Marjan Isakovic, Michael Krupp and Michael Stoll.	323
The act of giving – sur. A service for sharing and co-producing gifts Giulia Bencini, Kuno Prey and Alvis Mattozzi.	338
Building trust in relational services: The analysis of a sharing service between neighbours Mariana Freitas and Carla Cipolla.	357
Understanding generalisability from network-conscious service design projects Tim Overkamp, Martina Čaić, Stefan Holmlid, Dominik Mahr and Gaby Odekerken-Schröder.	368
Maps as participatory platform: towards to open data and transport service Hyunyim Park.	386
Service design and human resource consulting: An integrated vision Valentina Auricchio, Martina Rossi, Giovanna Dezza and Pierpaolo Peretti Griva.	401
Developing recovery oriented services and co-production in mental healthcare: Building-up on existing promising organisational practices Marta Carrera, Daniela Sangiorgi, Francesca Foglieni and Fabio Lucchi.	414
User perceptions of design games as settings for organizational learning: Case Topaasia Otso Hannula and J. Tuomas Harviainen	427

Quasi-participatory service design in organizational context: A case study Ravi Mahamuni, Shivani Sharma, Sylvan Lobo, Ulemba Hirom and Pramod Khambete.	440
Designing tangible tools to support collaboration in the co-design of healthcare services Karianne Rygh.	455
Integrating empathy and lived experience through co-creation in service design Josina Vink and Anna-Sophie Oertzen.	471
Collaborative services in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia. The case study of “Il quartiere bene comune - The neighbourhood as commons” Francesco Berni	484

Track 3: Measuring and evaluating

About evaluation in service design: As it is and how it could evolve Francesca Foglieni, Beatrice Villari, Froukje Sleeswijk Visser	489
Measuring the impact of design, service design and design thinking in organizations on different maturity levels Tua Björklund, Pia Hannukainen and Tuomas Manninen.	500
Using the net promoter score to support service design: Digging for gold in customer free-text reports Asbjørn Følstad and Knut Kvale.	512
ServDeWS: The service design workshop on utilizing multi-viewpoint and diversity of participants based-on human centered approach for R&D specialists Koki Kusano, Atsunobu Kimura and Masayuki Ihara	523
Mapping design capability of public service organisations: A tool for collaborative reflection Yvonne Yeo and Jung-Joo Lee	534
A service evaluation in the shared mobility sector: Bitride bike sharing project Silvia Cacciamatta and Virginia Allevi	550
A service to measure overall adequacy across a banking environment Fabio Poli and Alessandro Zorzi	555

Track 4: Governing and evidencing

Design craft in Government Marzia Mortati, Jesper Christiansen and Stefano Maffei	561
The role of service design consultancy in public sector: Inferences from KIBS and service innovation perspectives Adedapo Adebajo.	572
The stakeholder map: A conversation tool for designing people-led public services Fanny Giordano, Nicola Morelli, Amalia De Gotzen and Judith Hunziker.	582
Different journeys towards embedding design in local government in England Inbo Kang and Alison Prendiville.	598

Guiding the welfare state towards a co-creative and explorative mindset: When a crisis is an opportunity Matilda Legeby, Pia McAleenan, Hanna Andersson and Stefan Holmlid.	612
Co-designing public services with vulnerable and disadvantaged populations: Insights from an international collaboration Gillian Mulvale, Sandra Moll, Ashleigh Miatello, Glenn Robert, Michael Larkin, Victoria Palmer, Chelsea Gable and Alicia Powell.	629
Service design and the co-production of public policies: The case of RedActiva Cristobal Tello, Carola Zurob, Sol Pacheco and Sebastian Negrete.	631
Civic Imagination Office as a platform to design a collaborative city Michele d'Alena, Simona Beolchi and Stefania Paolazzi	645
Includi.MI: Local government and social entrepreneurship for an inclusive city Denise Di Dio	649

Track 5: Producing, distributing and organising

Service design in open production, distribution and organisation as a discipline facilitating democratic critique? Massimo Bianchini, Venanzio Arquilla, Peter Gall Krogh	654
Service design in the later project phases: Exploring the service design handover and introducing a service design roadmap Frida Almqvist.	666
Weaving the threads: Service innovation with textile artisan communities Francesco Mazzarella, Val Mitchell, Andrew May and Carolina Escobar-Tello.	679
The Coconut Innovation framework: An innovation framework focusing on resources Satoru Tokuhisa.	696
Municipality as a platform: the case of Manifattura Milano Annibale D'Elia	713

Track 6: Experiencing and shaping

"Experiencing and shaping": The relations between spatial and service design Davide Fassi, Laura Galluzzo, Oliver Marlow	717
Service design methods and tools as support to the participatory definition of the meta-design brief of a contemporary integrated campus Barbara Camocini, Luisa Collina, Laura Daglio, Martina Mazzarello and Paola Trapani	726
Service design principles for organizational well-being: Improving the employee experience through design thinking Marco Di Norcia, Fabiola Bertolotti and Matteo Vignoli	736
Designing spaces and services. An experimental project for student dormitories: Collective experiences, connected lives and linked places Claudia Mastrantoni, Luisa Collina, Peter Di Sabatino and Laura Galluzzo	751
Can coworking spaces be built bottom-up? Vanessa Monna, Giuliano Simonelli, Francesco Scullica and Elena Elgani	761

Design thinking for interior and spatial design: A case study within Politecnico di Milano Ngoc Pham and Davide Fassi	772
Engagement strategies within co-making environments bridging spatial and organisational design Ricardo Saint-Clair	785
Dance of designing: Rethinking position, relation and movement in service design Shana Agid and Yoko Akama	800
Facilitating in service design using desktop walkthroughs Johan Blomkvist and Fredrik Wahlman	812
Traces as service evidence Spyros Bofylatos	822
VR service walkthrough: A virtual reality-based method for service prototyping Costas Boletsis	834
Service+Spatial design: Introducing the fundamentals of a transdisciplinary approach Davide Fassi, Laura Galluzzo and Annalinda De Rosa	847
Space and service design into educational practice Nansi van Geetsom	863
Refugees Welcome Italia ONLUS, shaping the new hospitality system Lucia Oggioni,	876
Starting up communities in housing spaces Giordana Ferri	880

Track 7: Community and relationship building

New paradigms related to community building and identity in service design: Exploring global and local design initiatives Lisbeth Frølund, Margherita Pillan, Francesca Piredda	885
We are brand: Brand co-creation as an engine for new forms of welfare services Matteo Colombo, Elena Enrica Giunta and Paola Papetti.	896
Service design tools to engage marginalised youth in San Communities of Southern Africa Fabrizio Pierandrei, Silvia Remotti, Tang Tang, Shilumbe Chivuno Kuria and Stefano Anfossi.	911
Research by design and collaboration in the perspective of post-soviet 'nuclear' town Visaginas –RDCPP-SNTV Alla Pihalskaya.	924
Service design for community based tourism - The Brazilian case study Priscilla Ramalho Lepre.	940
Empowering community volunteers through matchmaking services Geertje Slingerland, Ingrid Mulder and Tomasz Jaskiewicz.	954
Service as a system of participation: A case study of a participatory economy Miso Kim.	966

A CRX framework and tools to design for relationships in service settings
Jan Koenders, Dirk Snelders, Maaïke Kleinsmann and Jürgen Tanghe. 976

Service design and activity theory for the meta-design of collaborative design processes
Massimo Menichinelli 994

Funding service design: Growing service design practice through a grants programme
Laura Warwick, Paola Pierri, Claire Bradnam and Emma Field. 1009

Track 8: Envisioning and evolving

Envisioning and evolving: Future evolution of the concept and the practice of service design
Daniela Sangiorgi, Lia Patricio and Francesco Zurlo 1019

Designing Convivial Food Systems in Everyday Life
Emily Ballantyne-Brodie. 1032

Trendslation – an experiential method for semantic translation in service design
Claire Dennington. 1049

Service design for artificial intelligence
Andrea Gasparini, Ahmed Abdi Mohammed and Gabriele Oropallo. 1064

Constructing an approach to identify service design narratives: Findings of an automated text analysis
Mauricio Manhaes. 1074

Resident autonomy in assisted living facilities: a conceptual framework for transformative service research
Valeria Ramdin, Miso Kim, Rachel Pozzar, Xing Zhou, Yixuan Zhang and Paul Fombelle. 1088

Digital methods for service design experimenting with data-driven frameworks
Roberta Tassi, Agata Brilli and Donato Ricci. 1100

Bridging design-driven and service innovation: Consonance and dissonance of meaning and value
Ana Kustrak Korper, Stefan Holmlid and Lia Patrício. 1130

Service designers, unite! Identifying shared concerns among multidisciplinary perspectives on service design
Maíra Prestes Joly, Jorge Grenha Teixeira, Lia Patrício and Daniela Sangiorgi. 1144

Perceived Action Potential: A strong concept in development
Vanessa Rodrigues, Johan Blomkvist and Stefan Holmlid. 1162

Design the impact
Cristina Favini 1175

Enhancing industrial processes in the industry sector by the means of service design
Giuseppe Attoma Pepe and Peter Livaudais 1179

PhD Special Seminar

The PhD Special Seminar on service design: unfolding a proof of concept 1186
Annalinda De Rosa, Stefano Parisi and Camilo Ayala García

Workshops

From A to BE. Designing the mobility of the future 1205
Antonio Grillo, Antonella Paparella, Giselle Chajin, Giulia Di Gregorio, Michele Armellini, Alessandro and Gomiero, Maria Prina

Data challenges and opportunities in designing for service 1206
Amalia de Gó'tzen, Nicola Morelli, Luca Simeone, Lorenzo Ruggieri, Ilaria Vitellio

Between servitude and collaboration: A service design choice? 1207
Carla Cipolla, Ezio Manzini, Mattelmä'ki Tuuli, Arianna Mazzeo, Lara Penin, Adam Thorpe

The latest words on service design: Talking about books 1208
Lorenzo Imbesi, Francesca Foglieni, Markus Edgar Hormess, Adam Lawrence, Stefano Maffei, Lara Penin, Alison Prendiville, Daniela Sangiorgi, Jakob Schneider, Daniela Selloni, Mark Stickdorn, Beatrice Villari

How service design can drive the digital transformation of the retail revolution 1209
Alessandro Piana Bianco, Linda Covino

Digital transformation through community and relationship building 1210
Francesca Piredda, Caterina Petroni, Simona Venditti, Emiliano Verga

Service design for autonomous driving 1211
Valerio Cometti, Marco Generali, Giacomo Biraghi

Gamification for service design and innovation workshop 1212
Rui Patrício and Rei Morozumi

Humanizing organizations - the pathway to growth 1229
Andrea Augsten, Titta Jylkä's, Rachel Hollowgrass, Marjukka Makela Klippi

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Designing spaces and services. An experimental project for student dormitories: Collective experiences, connected lives and linked places

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Abstract

This paper describes an experimental teaching project for a student dormitory building in Milan, Italy; and through this applied project the paper presents possible relationships between spatial (environment and experience design) and service design. A human-centered design process was used, exploring the potential of creativity and design thinking while co-creating with the actual people involved in the project – the dormitory students, staff, and the local community members. The process and the methodology used were very important, especially the co-design activities: the dorm, in fact, was designed by the PSSD students in the studio for the students and with the students of the dorm. The dormitory, as a part, like most university campuses and schools, as a whole, can be considered an urban hub through which synergistic relations take place between the structure of the dorm and the neighbourhood and vice versa. Six interesting scenarios designed by students that explore the sense of community hub and a place of social cohesion are included.

KEYWORDS: service design, spatial design, co-design, design education, community hub

Introduction

Design today faces complex problems and situations. It has a holistic approach (Buchanan, 1992), and therefore, more and more seemingly separate areas of intervention are overlapping and intersecting. Design is changing from a single craft-oriented discipline into one that is more robust and multidisciplinary, connected with social environments, products, services, systems and brands (Friedman, 2002; Muratovski, 2010). Disciplines such as the design of spaces and services often require interactions in the various stages of the project. Service Design, which always combines the design of tangible and intangible aspects (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011), in a hyper-connected, digital and ephemeral world like ours, needs more and more tangible, secure, stable, and physical aspects. A clear example of this strong need

for dialogue is the increasingly widespread need for digital services to intersect physical space, as in the case of Amazon delivery sites, for example.

On the other hand, Environmental Design, especially in the design of public spaces, requires a strong user and use definition; especially with more faceted and changing functions, and with built relationships needed to be defined. An architecture that extends or exceeds its building limits transforms to produce energy of intangible qualities that change over time. (Branzi, 2006)

Every day, the relationship between these two disciplines becomes more fundamental, productive and important. Overlap and integration between the tools used by both disciplines is also important in the design process, including in the education context. Adding and enriching the storyboards and user journeys (tools adopted by service design approach) with more spatial details will transform them as useful tools for representing the environment, and its flows, its uses and its functions.

Also the use of co-design tools can help the relationship between spatial and service design approaches. “Co-design offers a flexible portfolio of soft system methodologies which ensure that the voices of the key actors and stakeholders are heard and integrated into the system being designed. This participation in the design process is essential to maximise the satisfaction of all parties involved in service use or provision.” (Fuad-Luke, 2012)

Additionally, “co-designing our services could be the next critical evolution of service design to ensure the sustained integration of human and natural ecologies for our cities” (Fuad-Luke, 2012).

The Students' Dorm as a Place of Social Cohesion

In this process of interplay between the two design fields, as mentioned in the introduction, a special role is found in the public interior and exterior spaces. In fact, there are aggregators of different functions that can be considered as fulcrums for inner neighbourhoods and urban areas. In particular, university campuses, schools, and student residences can be considered as urban hubs through which synergistic relations take place between and within the space-service concerned, and the surrounding urban areas.

Student dorms can be considered as community hubs, as inclusive locations open to different social groups and urban populations. They can host services and activities related to daily life (training, work, etc.), but above all they can be places with great flexibility in terms of scheduling and access; they can be places that remain open, active, and vibrant in different time zones, and can become a living reference point in the territory.

Focusing on schools, campuses and university residences, understood as portions of cities that traditionally relate to a practice of well-defined users (students, faculty and staff), today means trying to develop a model of action and integration in a context that can innovate not only the image, but also the activities, of the campuses themselves in the city.

If we talk about powerful relationships between the residence and the surrounding area, we can definitely identify different types of beneficiaries: first of all, the university students who benefit from the opportunity to develop social relations between them and the local community to access resources and services, and that can be promoted by the students themselves in synergy with the actors of the local community.

The other group of beneficiaries are the residents of the neighbourhoods who will find in the neighbourhood the opportunity to access resources (tangible and intangible) that are not present or are poorly represented in the area - such as new services, functions, and activities offered by the dorms and also open to the neighbourhood; plus new educational and cultural skills – and the opportunity to develop trust and exchange relationships that will enhance the social cohesion and empowerment of the local community. Particularly when the residences are located in peripheral, fragile and/or problematic areas in the city, it becomes essential to offer the activation and development of new services and public utility activities and the creation of new socio-cultural structures and services with the aim of reducing the situations of social isolation through the creation of aggregate and attractive structures, environments, and experiences.

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752

Designing spaces and services. An experimental project for student dormitories: Collective experiences, connected lives and linked places

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Specifically, in this case, we reference community hubs in the process of transforming abandoned or underused spaces into multifunctional places that host culture and creativity activities. These are regenerated spaces and structures that share some common features: they are inclusive locations open to different urban populations; they are flexible in terms of use and activities by providing answers to different needs; they are flexible in scheduling and accessibility which transforms these sites into landmarks for the local neighbourhood; they are places and services often born from co-design and co-management by local communities, residents of neighbourhoods, public and private associations and bodies; they are engaging local communities and places of generation of new social practices; and they are places that propose themselves as social aggregators, but also as promoters of new job opportunities, and generators of new economies.

The activities offered by community hubs can be multiple and related to different fields: culture and creativity; support for families; technology; communication; leisure and sport, education and training; art; work and new businesses; sustainable consumption, etc.

Environmental and Experience Studio: an Educational Trial

How can place, space and experience be potent and memorable components of a comprehensive service and system design approach? That is the basic question that was asked to the students of a Service Design and Environmental Design studio (by Prof. Luisa Collina, Prof. Peter Di Sabatino, Prof. Laura Galluzzo, with Ilaria Bollati, Claudia Mastrantoni, Vanessa Monna as Teaching Assistants) at Politecnico di Milano – with its specific focus explored how PSSD and Environment and Experience Design can merge. The studio engaged an international mix of 38 students, including Turkey, Bulgaria, Italy, Thailand, Greece, India, Iran, Colombia, Austria, China, Egypt, Serbia, Spain, Germany, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Scotland and Malaysia. The students were divided into 11 working groups, creating an interdisciplinary mix of thinkers, makers and doers that also mixed students were from different educational background, such as interiors, product, communication, sustainable design, engineering and architecture.

The studio worked with the existing - and yet to exist - products, services, systems, environments, and experiences at the 'given context' (the dormitory building and its context) in a sort of prototypical manner with a particular focus on public and communal spaces, way-finding, and overall communications / media.

It is not enough to see architecture; you must experience it. You must observe how it was designed for a special purpose and how it was attuned to the entire concept and rhythm of a specific era.... Seeing demands a certain activity on the part of the spectator. It is not enough passively to let a picture form itself on the retina of the eye. The retina is like a movie screen on which a continuously changing stream of pictures appears but the mind behind the eye is conscious of only very few of them (Rasmussen, 1964).

The studio explored and practiced the design of environments and experiences as leading components of a comprehensive product/system/service design proposal. The importance of place and space was therefore critical to understand, to manipulate and to create. To do so all the students tried to see space, feel space, and imagine space, as well as see and understand the scale and sense of the environment, and to have the ability to manipulate or create space.

The triad of Space / Object / Surface is fundamental to us as humans, and certainly to us as designers, strong familiarity, understanding and ability in all three areas are vital for creative excellence, innovation and experimentation.

The studio developed familiarity, understanding and ability in a variety of ways, and through a variety of processes and tools. Readings, lectures, in-situ visits, case studies, prototyping, and iterative design work was combined with photography, video, sketching, diagramming,

writing, drawing and modeling. Each group of students visited and documented the site, observed and imagined possibilities, engaged the various constituents, and created comprehensive proposals in relation to the existing and potential environments and experiences at the dorm in terms of a normative Product/Service/System design approach and deliverables combined with attention to spatial and experiential design. Additionally, communication strategies of varying types and at various scales were very important to the project, and each group studied and developed a work in this area.

One of the main focus of the studio was to have the opportunity to explore how the dorms, and their context, form a sort of network amongst themselves, with the institutions, and with the city trying to understand how might “Collective Experiences”, “Connected Lives” and “Linked Places” really have meaning, and how they might manifest in design.

The Co-Design Role. A residence for themselves: students that design for students with students

A human-centered design process was used, taking the potential of creativity and design thinking while co-creating with the people involved in the project. The studio’s actors try to offer techniques, methods, tips, and worksheets to guide participants (specifically students, staff and local communities members connected to the dorm), through a process that gives a voice to the dorm’s community and allows their desires to guide the creation and implementation of solutions. This is not always a linear process but it is rather always made by three main phases, starting from the *Exploration*, going through the *Ideation* phase and creating a “*Prototipation*.” The main aspect is to underline and build empathy with this dorm community and generate a chance to design a feasible new service-environmental solution that can be tested and placed in the context.

The first stage – Exploration – aims at the identification of a significant objective and its possible development in relation to the given context. The method used is the *Community Driven Discovery*: interacting with real experts on the dormitory topic (students, staff, architects, community members, etc.) - people who have the best insights to start building the *Design Challenge*. In this phase, the design process considers the recruiting members of the community as a primary researcher, translator and key informant for the project. The study of the given context through the meeting with the various stakeholders identifying spaces, available services and the general existing atmosphere generated by the environment, helped to create an analysis of *Strengths*, *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* (SWOT analysis). This helped to begin an outline of strategic action. Different techniques were used for an in-depth research about the insights like *Interviews*, *Shadowings* and *Fly on the wall* techniques.

The second stage the Ideation part took place during the two days of on-site, co-design sessions. The facilitators were the studio’s students. One of the strengths was the multicultural / diverse nature of the project teams, with different nationalities, disciplinary and educational background. The method of group-based interviews, especially when diverse, can be a valuable way to learn about a community quickly. Group interviews can be good for learning about community life and dynamics, understanding general community issues, and giving everyone in a community the chance to voice their views (IDEO.org). The environment was divided into big activities, such as “Speed dating” groups, “Interviewing” groups and “Shadowing” groups. The co-design session was able to gather more than 100 participants from the dormitory and engage them in different activities with the main goal of understanding who they are, their problems, desires and feelings towards their living space as well as their ideas for improvement. The activities by the students and with the students also included “Hotpot”, “Express yourself wall”, “Feelings board” and a “Word game”. The data generated during this activity was highly relevant, and it was the foundation for most of the studio projects.



Figure 1 – An example of the “family posters” created during the Studio not only to promote the co-design session but also to create the first engagement and touch point with the dorm’s community.

Sometimes users can play co-creating roles throughout the design process, i.e. become co-designers, but not always. It depends on the level of expertise, passion, and creativity of the user and designer, and other issues and constraints. All people are creative, and can help to inform, but not all people become designers. Four levels of creativity can be seen in people's lives: doing, adapting, making and creating (Sanders, 2006). Perhaps people with a high level of passion and knowledge in certain domains, and who are invited to participate directly in the design process can certainly become co-designers (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). In any case, design process is, or should be, inclusive, and hence all can contribute.

In the case of the project and process, the student designers don't passively receive the knowledge from the stakeholders, but may also really have empathy with their student colleagues, and understand their needs and thoughts because they may be (or have been) users of this dormitory life too - and as service designers, they are able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the insights. Using the “in context immersion” method, meeting people where they live, work and socialize, and immersing themselves, reveal unexpected opportunities. They are researcher that bring knowledge from the theories, and develop more knowledge through observation and interviews (Sanders & Stappers 2008).

So, in this co-design session the roles get mixed up: the participants who will eventually be served through the design process are given the position of “expert of experience”, and play an important role in knowledge development, idea generation and concept development. In generating insights, the researcher supports the “expert of experience” by providing tools for ideation and expression.

A Selection of Six Different Scenarios of Use foreseen by Students

The last phase of the studio had the specific focus on exploring how environment and experience design can merge by prototyping ideas born during the research phase and the co-design session. As mentioned, the design of environments, especially in the design of public spaces, benefits from a strong and detailed use and user definition. Different methods and hybrid tools can be mixed up creating frameworks to highlight key relationships and develop the strategy (e.g. journey map, relational map, customer journey map, storyboards, etc.)

A journey map can help to visualize a process from the beginning to the end; it's a linear process and easily allows you to imagine an entire flow of an experience. During the ideation

phase, all the student designers developed much information to be organized, and through the hybrid tools everyone was able to visualize patterns, understand the perspective of the constituents, and finally unpack the context they're working within.

Below, in figure 2, we can see a customers' journey map outlined by students of the studio, describing a typical critical moment "the arrival of a new student" in the dorm. The map is supported by characters and actors, an emotional graph which describes the feelings of the new student (customer) at the time, and all the pros & cons in the precise touch point, space, moment of the journey. In particular, here in the diagram, we can see the moment of the "arrival of a new student" at the Dorm, how does he/she feel seeing the structure from the outside and if she/he, for example, are able to reach easily the building.

The first touch-point between the students and staff is perhaps the main starting point of the most developed project in the studio. One of the best studio outcomes is the "welcome kit" designed by the students with city maps, social engagement gadgets, souvenirs, rules, and paperwork... that can help the new dorm arrival to "feel at home" and to create their first steps in the experience / journey.

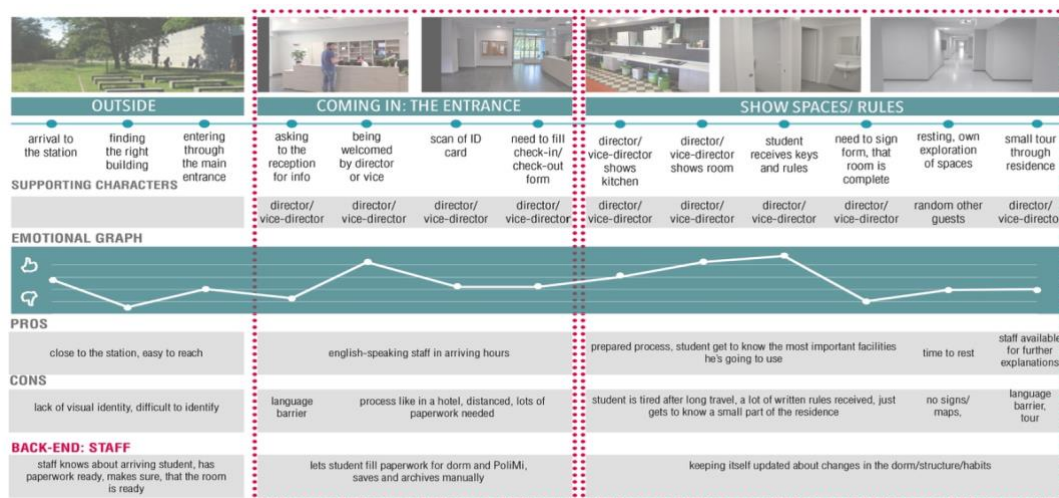


Figure 2 – One of the Customer / User Journey Maps developed during the Ideation phase of the Studio. "A Place to Meet", project by: Camilla Fraboni, Felicitas Schmittinger, Paula Soler, Cristina Tamburello.

Many different scenarios of use and experience have been developed while trying to address the main intentions of the studio, which included delivering at least one affective communication channel, one innovative service, a new environmental communication, and one new spatial proposal. This paper has selected six different scenarios proposed by students to demonstrate the different outputs generated from the research. The first project underlines the potential of the garden and the entrance of the building as a gathering point for activity and socialization with the neighbourhood. As stressed, the key point of this paper, and of the studio was to examine the dorm as a possible place for social cohesion. The second proposal emphasizes the sense of belonging to campus life, while generating sports activities to foster a sense of school spirit and instill a sense of community. The third student project highlights interior multi-functional spaces through an intense analysis and SWOT process.

The fourth example describes a digital board as an innovative service to create and share events, while also connecting people inside and outside the dorm.

The fifth proposal is a "memento project" that is made with the aim of recording experiences through an object.

And the last selection, as mentioned above, contains a "welcome kit" as a "gift" to the new arrivals at the dorm which can help them to move forward in the first steps of this new experience.

- The garden area as a filter between the dormitory and the neighbourhood:
“Multitone - Cultural Hub” is a project (developed by: Gea Sasso, Serena Chillè, Sook Yin Fong, Rita Faia) located in the garden and in the auditorium, using the reception as a welcome and information point. The hub hosts a set of activities: a “Seasonal Festive Market” that allows for cultural exchange and ensures all the students far from their home feel less lonely during festivities; a “Monthly Market” for swapping and selling that translates cultural exchange into goods; “Programmed Film Weekends” with screenings during the weekends where neighbours and students can enjoy cinematographic pieces together; and “Open Class” where anyone can take advantage of the space and propose their own classes. All activities are planned to be managed by the student desk at the reception, and centralized in the platform where it is possible to buy tickets, consult the agenda, connect with other members of the Hub, and share ideas.

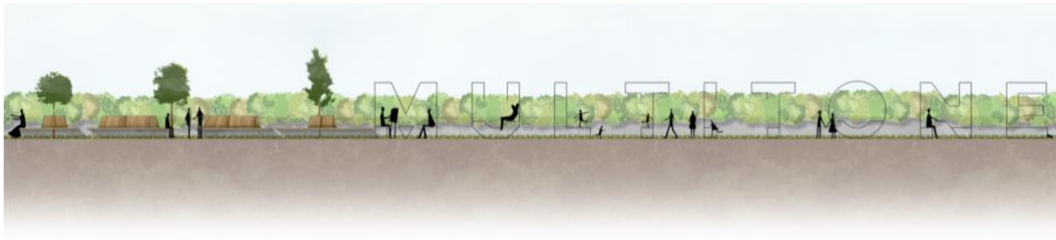


Figure 3 – Frontal View of a part of the “Multitone – Cultural Hub” project.

- Creating a sense of belonging and enhancing the participation of campus life in the dorm: **“Team Dorms Cup”** project (developed by: Giulia Balboni, Samuil Botev, Marianna Carbone, Anrui Xu) talks about the internal dorm community which is composed by all residents. The aim of the community is to involve people in active participation in campus life. In order to make everyone feel part of the community, and to avoid different levels of involvement, the idea is that everybody who joins the dorm automatically starts belonging to the Team from the very first moment. The aim is to build strong relations among students, making it more satisfied to live in the dorm and to be proud of it.
- Multifunctional spaces are seen as places of Social Engagement: **“Ikos – Spaces for everyone”** project (developed by: Martina Hopfner, Doàa Mohamed Refaat, Anna Virginia Rigillo, Beatriz Rincon Pozuelo) represents the idea of making social engagement suitable for everyone, to feel the context of space according to intimacy and mood, and to be able to create different levels of interaction.



Figure 4 – A “Social Engagement – Multifunctional space” inside the “Ikos – spaces for everyone” project.

- Innovative Service to connect events, activities and spaces with people: **“The Online Board”** developed in the project called “X Newton” (by, Dimitrios Chatzichristos, Simone Chiani, Marisel Sinta Ramos, Luca Tajè) is an online service created especially for dorm residents. It serves the combination of spaces and activities, and lets people use them to invite people, create events, promote activities, offer courses/services, and create a big inner network of connections.
- A flexible common ground towards creating shared experiences and the idea of “recording memories” with the **“Memento – Symbolic Artefact”** developed in the project called “Our Newton” (by: Martin Andreev, Sean Fegan, Giulia Capriotti, Maddalena Mazzocchi) is focused on the idea to record and document memories within the community, a memento is gifted to each resident at the end of their stay. This memento is shaped by the individuals engagement with other residents on the online platform.



Figure 5 – “Memento – Symbolic Artefact” prototype.

- To create a sense of belonging and to foster a sense of school spirit: **“Welcome Kit”** is a useful analogic innovative service developed in the project called “Welcome Home” (by: Sebastiano Gobbo, Clara Marcolin, Ao Shen, Susana Soto Bustamante) that helps the new arrivals at the dorm to move through the first steps in this new experience. It contains a guide map of the city, a language guide, and some souvenirs to personalize the environments, some objects for the school, and a personalized mug. The welcome kit is to be considered as a filter between the staff and the students as a first touch point of the entire dormitory experience.



Figure 6 – “Welcome Kit” prototype.

Finally, all the scenarios and outputs delivered have the same components in common: to propose improvements and relevance, to increase the efficiency and impact of the various spaces, to create comfort issues, to build engagement, to increase awareness and impact, and to investigate communication.

Conclusions

These last scenarios illustrate how positive the relations between the community hub and the urban environment could be, particularly in the case of a university residence and the dynamics that can be establish with the neighbourhood.

The positive synergies that are created between different populations, as we have seen, can help to change peripheral areas (and not only) by avoiding dangerous processes of gentrification and favouring a collaborative bottom-up process, and to do this there is no better tool than co-design processes.

As we have seen, co-designing the space-service in question allows a close collaboration between all stakeholders in the design development process together with a variety of professionals having hybrid design/research skills. The participants will come from diverse backgrounds, and with many types of cultures: disciplinary culture, corporate culture, ethnic culture, worldview, mind-set, etc. (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

In the future, we can imagine an evolution of the tools and processes that allow co-design: “One of the major challenges in planning and architecture today is the communication gap between the design team, the different levels of ‘user groups’ and the wide array of specialized consultants to the process. In the future, the new co-design languages that support and facilitate the many varieties of cross-cultural communication will become highly appreciated” (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). We can also imagine an evolution of the tools that promote an integrated synergy between spatial design and design for services.

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