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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
Proceedings of the ServDes.2018 Conference*

Editors:

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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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Track 2: Sharing and collaborating

The discourse on co-created and/or co-produced collaborative services has today spread to all service-related organisations. Collaboration is a multifaceted construct that merits reflection on its actual effectiveness to generate relevant services (co-designed services), to produce implementable solutions (co-produced services) and to introduce more democratic yet effective methods of working (co-creation as a service).

This track aims to reflect on:

- collaboration as an approach to designing services: it refers to the capacity of a design process to engage stakeholders. This practice is claimed to be beneficial to the quality of the design output with regard to the user's needs and experience, the likelihood of a service being implemented, the ability of a group to work as a team.
- collaboration as a way of delivering services thanks to the participation of the beneficiary, whether user or provider. It is typical of p2p services, services in a collaborative & sharing economy and in a platform economy.
- collaboration as a way to foster a participatory mindset in society and to raise awareness about issues of public interest. As such, collaborative services can be embedded in private and public entities to bring about more democratic processes.

Finally, all forms of collaboration can benefit from digital technologies that enable otherwise impossible interactions to become key channels for co-creating and collaborating.

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Sharing and collaborating in service design

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Abstract

This paper introduces the track on co-created and/or co-produced collaborative services within different types of organisations, from the public realm, to the private and third sector. We navigate this wide field in the wake of three main interpretations of what collaboration may entail: collaboration as an approach to conceive services, i.e. co-design, collaboration as way in which services are implemented and delivered, i.e. co-production, and collaboration as a way to raise awareness about issues of public interest, i.e. participation and democracy. The various papers submitted to this track are clustered according to these three domains: the part on co-design explores the development of tools and the inclusion of stakeholders, the issue of co-production mainly refers to the empowerment of individuals within professional networks and local communities, while questions of democracy and power relationships highlight the importance to address in future how service design practice for sharing and collaboration intersects and contributes to a larger societal development.

KEYWORDS: service design, co-design, co-production, social innovation, participatory design, democracy

Introduction

The discourse on co-created and/or co-produced collaborative services has today spread to all service-related organisations, from the public realm, to the private and third sector. Terms such as co-design and co-production have become widespread and have opened up questions related to the role of designers, the object of the design action and the relation between stakeholders and professionals as well as between the stakeholders themselves. To enter this wide debate, we propose to navigate the “sharing and collaborating” track in the wake of three main interpretations of what collaboration may entail.

Firstly, collaboration may be considered as an approach to designing services that involves engaging multiple stakeholders. Thus it entails investigating the benefits of co-design

processes in the quality of the outputs, the relationships between actors and organizations and the innovation paths enabled by such an approach.

Secondly, collaboration is connected to the way services are implemented and delivered, with particular reference to the involvement of users, and more in general of the beneficiaries, in the co-production of a service. Peer-to-peer networks, collaborative and relational services (Jegou and Manzini, 2008, Cipolla and Manzini, 2009), sharing economy and open platforms are well-known examples in which digital technologies enable otherwise impossible interactions to become key channels for co-creating and collaborating.

Thirdly, collaboration can be seen as a way to foster a participatory mindset in society and raise awareness about issues of public interest by introducing questions that relate more to the democratic nature of processes, as well as to power relationships and empowerment.

These three domains, co-design, co-production, participation and democracy, are helpful to frame such a wide concept as “sharing and collaborating”, which the service design community has extensively discussed and investigated. Having clarified our terms we shall briefly introduce an overview on the current research agenda while introducing the papers in this track.

In recent years we have observed the emergence of a multiplicity of initiatives labelled “codesign activities” that encompass private, public and third sectors. As Smith et al. (2017) argue, we are currently experiencing an “era of participation” and a “participatory culture” in which people can share their interests and concerns thanks to the rise of internet and Web 2.0 applications (Bannon and Ehn, 2012).

Numerous participatory events and programmes are organised all over the world under different names, such as codesign sessions, creative workshops, public consultations, civic hackathons etc. One reason for this is that the idea of tackling the most pressing societal challenges through collective creativity is emerging as fundamental within governments and organisations in general. The main notion at the core of codesign is that people with different voices should collaborate in the process of designing a variety of items, ranging from products to services, strategies and policies. Services in particular are “complex items that demand complex processes be tackled, processes in which it is necessary to involve a variety of players who are largely interdependent and therefore who must collaborate in order to achieve any goal” (Meroni et al., 2018).

Codesigning a service actually requires the participation of multiple and various actors from both expert and non-expert domains: they are the end-users and the stakeholders, who should collaborate in all phases and circumstances of design processes (Sanders and Stappers, 2008; Steen, 2013), from opportunity finding to prototyping, from creation to assessment, and from laboratories to the streets (Ehn, 2017). Furthermore, as Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) argue, methods and tools from the service design discipline are particularly useful in framing interactive design processes between multiple entities. Hence, codesigning services is a progressive alignment of diverse actors and resources from the initial stage of understanding a problem to the final development phase.

In this perspective, codesign may be viewed as the first step in a more extensive collaboration process, or, as Selloni (2017) states, as an essential pre-condition to co-production, co-managing and co-governance in general. Codesign is here understood as a useful way of aligning the interests of diverse actors who are involved in a creative process, considering all participants as partners and substituting responsiveness with collaboration (Branden and Pestoff 2006). People are considered as actual resources, and their participation in codesign and co-production processes in general has great transformative potential for all the actors involved (both from the private and public realms). In this sense, codesign may be viewed as an important pre-condition to any kind of collaboration, meaning that it could work as a facilitator and as a way to prepare the ground

and prevent conflicts among actors, thus becoming a useful, iterative form of ‘reflection-in-action’ (Bannon and Ehn, 2012).

Within this framework, the shift from passive users to active contributors, from customers to co-producers lies at the basis of a widely shared definition of co-production, which points back to Ostrom’s original definition: “co-production is a process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not in the same organisation” (Parks et al., 1981). The connection of co-production with the public realm (Osborne et al., 2016, Pestoff, 2012) is largely discussed as a matter of improving the quality of public sector responses to citizens’ needs through the integration of users’ knowledge and competences in the delivery of services (Cahn 2008, Nesta 2012, Vorberg 2017, Boyle & Harris 2009, Nambisan & Nambisan 2013).

On the other hand, when referring to the private sector, the emergence of collaborative services, of the sharing economy paradigm (Botsman, 2013), and more in general of a ‘co-production economy’ (Von Hippel, 2005), which enables the sharing of resources (whether goods, competencies, or time), reveals both a vertical (provider-users) and a horizontal (among users themselves) collaboration trajectory (Cipolla et al. 2013), as well as a bottom-up and top-down organizational arrangement (Seravalli and Eriksen, 2017). Since they generate social relations, as well as more sustainable ways of consuming and living, these forms of sharing and collaborating have been considered as potential social innovation practices (Manzini and Stazowsky, 2013, Selloni, 2017).

Moving beyond the traditional provider-customer duality, the service design community has acknowledged the importance of analysing services from a system perspective, One where design focuses on developing both the conditions for these collaborative relationships to happen, and the flexible physical and digital platforms or “infrastructures” to be released and adapted, transformed, owned by people (Freire and Sangiorgi, 2010). Undoubtedly, technology lies at the basis of such relationships, enabling the interconnection (and often the exploitation) of existing, under-used, distributed resources, which are shared in trust-based contexts, thus innovating service delivery models.

Finally, reflecting on co-production as “making services together”, calls for further discussion, firstly, on promoting authentic reciprocity and shifting the balance of power from professionals to individuals and communities (Selloni, 2017, Boyle & Harris, 2009), and secondly, on the risks of a progressive commodification of human relationships (Seravalli and Eriksen, 2017, Thrift, 2006)

In this perspective, sharing and collaborating are also discussed in relation to their potential (and limits) when it comes to empowering citizens with possibilities to be part of, and influence, service design and delivery. Participatory cultures (Jenkins 2006) are spreading, however, as Arnstein (1969) already warned long ago, participation is not democratic per se, since it can be instrumental to empowerment as well as to logics of control and tokenism. Hence the need to carefully consider how sharing and collaboration are designed and performed.

The Participatory Design community has long been exploring how co-design processes can empower users, support dialogues between stakeholders with different interests, and provide space to marginal voices in matters that concern them (Simonsen and Robertson, 2012). This exploration has been revealing how co-design is intrinsically political, with issues of representation, power and control playing a key role in the unfolding of processes and their outcomes (Kensing and Blomberg 2008; Bratteteig and Wagner 2012).

In a broader perspective, the concepts of collaborative services (Jegou and Manzini 2008) and creative communities (Meroni, 2007) have been highlighting how sharing knowledge and resources and peer-to-peer collaboration can empower local communities to respond to their own needs, without waiting for and engaging with the public sector or the market. In a

similar way, co-production is also discussed as a matter of providing citizens with opportunities to influence processes and decision making in the public sector (Nesta 2012). However, there are also many examples that clearly show how sharing and collaborative services do not necessarily entail users' and citizens' empowerment. In the public sector, it has emerged how co-production initiatives can favour concentration of power in the hands of private actors rather than communities (Civil Exchange 2015). The notion of platform capitalism (Srnicek 2016) refers to companies that, through the creation of (digital) platforms, enable sharing and collaboration among users for the creation of different services. Yet, users are excluded from any control over the platforms that define the conditions for sharing and collaboration, and which profit from the participants' interactions.

Questions of power and control are thus emerging forcefully in relation to sharing and collaborative services and there is a growing interest towards experimenting with logics and models that might ensure participants' control over processes and their outcomes (Benkler 2006, Bollier and Helfrich 2015, Scholz 2016). The need has also been discussed for new policies and regulations (Smorto 2015) and a new role for the public sector, which, while encouraging and enabling sharing and collaborative services, should pay attention to questions of control and power distribution in these initiatives (Bauwens 2012).

In a nutshell, sharing and collaboration can promote more democratic ways to design and deliver services. However, they can also be instrumental to logics of pure information extraction from and, exploitation of, participants by transferring responsibilities and duties to them, without providing them with increased control or influence over processes.

Service designers are thus meeting with two challenges. The first one relates to how to deal with the democratic opportunities and challenges that co-design entails. The second one is about understanding and navigating the power and control struggles that the participatory turn in the public and private sectors entails.

The 3 main themes, around which we have articulated the theoretical framework on “sharing and collaborating”, are here used to reflect on the contributions proposed in the accepted papers. They introduce a discussion focused mainly on codesign tools and processes, rather than on co-production ones and issues such as participation, democracy, power and empowerment. Indeed, we expected more insights on evaluating such processes and on assessing their real impact on both short and long term perspectives, and on the phases that follow the “design before use” (Ehn, 2008).

Codesign as a way of sharing and collaborating

The majority of the papers submitted to this track mention co-design as a way of sharing and collaborating. The notion of co-design is discussed under different perspectives and we here highlight a selection of issues mainly related to:

- the conception and application of different tools;
- the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders;
- the dark side of co-design.

On the conception and application of different tools

Extensive reflections about co-design tools are present in numerous papers: they deal with their possible classifications, with the application of traditional service design tools within co-creation processes and their actual effectiveness, and they also discuss issues such as the tangibility or intangibility of tools.

For example, Hannula and Harviainen (2018) propose the use of design games as tools of organizational co-development: such design games can be card games, board games, or role-plays that have some physical components and their main aim is to support innovation and reflection through play. They experimented a design game named Topaasia whose application within organisations was efficient and useful, because it brought existing processes within organizations into play.

Both Auricchio et al. (2018) and Mahamuni et al. (2018) argue that traditional service design tools (persona, customer journey map, service blueprint etc.) are valuable for other professions and contexts, highlighting that, in applying this tools, it is useful to blend an agile approach, multiple iterations and stakeholder workshops.

Perez Mengual et al. (2018) analyse co-design tools in the specific environment of a Living Lab. They identify three categories of tools for visitor interaction: tools for passive integration, for reactive integration and for co-creation. They argue that an extensive repertoire of tools of reactive integration for diffident visitors already exist, while new tools need to be developed for time-sensitive visitors and enthusiasts. More in general, within co-creation spaces, it is important that each visitor follows his/her own path, encompassing multiple roles, which should not be perceived as fixed categories, but may vary. Future research should explore elements that influence the factors of time and commitment, “such as perception of time, self-assessment, prior knowledge, personal interest and even individual contextual reasons such as mood and atmosphere”.

Rygh (2018) distinguishes between intangible and tangible tools, She focuses on the latter, which are divided into generic tools (tools that lack specificity and are regarded as products for facilitators), template tools (tools that have a predefined format used as a starting point for a particular application) and contextual tools (tools that are designed specifically for a certain context or tailored for an activity). The use of tangible tools is specifically important within the service design discipline, as services are intangible by definition: these are three-dimensional cognitive scaffolds that accelerate and enable collective sense-making, triggering dialogue through the placements, movements and arrangements.

Finally, Koo and Ahn (2018), in their comparative analysis of co-design processes in the Western and South Korean context, highlight the importance of developing tools appropriate to clients’ levels of knowledge and involvement, which may vary according to the different scopes of a codesign process. They argue how service designers “need to develop co-creative tools based not on specialized methods, but rather on stakeholders’ understanding and continuous exploration of how to deliver the progress of the tool to stakeholders”.

On the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders

The inclusion of non-design actors within co-creation processes is viewed as fundamental in numerous papers of this track: for example Mahamuni et al. (2018) highlight how design concepts generated by participatory design teams are more innovative and useful than those generated by design professionals alone, emphasising that this inclusion helps in gaining better knowledge of users’ needs and long-term benefits such as more successful innovations, higher loyalty of users and higher satisfaction of users.

Righ (2018), in analysing tangible tools to support collaboration in healthcare services, highlights how co-design for services results in a particular case of cross-organizational collaboration where the boundaries between different realms need to be overcome. She points out that co-design for services is specifically characterised by the utilization of methods and tools to gain contextual knowledge and bring actors together, which is why she focuses on the development of appropriate tangible tools to support this dialogue and enhance collaboration among different stakeholders.

Auricchio et al. (2018) state that the integration of designers with other professions to better respond to business demands is crucial and they make an original proposal of integration. From professional experience and from confrontation with students, they realized that the design world is increasingly connecting with the world of HR agencies, and, more specifically, service design and HR consultants have some competences in common. Currently, both professions are involved within strategic projects that support businesses facing change: from the design perspective, through developing new services, and from the HR consulting point of view, through enabling people to engage in change. The encounter between these two professions is still at the beginning, but it is promising and it puts collaboration at the centre of business transformation processes. In such processes, the role of designer changes, as also Muratovski (2015) argues: the designer is no longer viewed as the expert who comes out with an idea, but as a facilitator able to interact with very different stakeholders and guide them to find solutions together. According to Auricchio et al. (2018), this represents a big shift in the traditional service design activity because it implies facilitating non-designers with very different backgrounds in co-creating solutions. They highlight a lack of a specific competence in facilitation for the service designers and this is matter for further research and experimentation.

Cacciamatta et al. (2018) analyse the benefits of applying co-design tools and processes when developing a free-floating bike sharing with a traditional manufacturer company. In particular, they focus on the impact of co-design activities involving, not the end users, but rather the stakeholders, who will act as providers (the SME), and hosts of the shared mobility service (Municipality of Milan). They argue how the role of the designer evolves from facilitators of a shared process, to being enablers of a common learning process and triggers of innovations, thus reinforcing the concept of “co-design as driver of change” (Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011). Moreover, they highlight the educational value that co-design could generate in transferring design thinking competencies and tools to companies, thus fostering collaboration among departments and introducing a service-related culture, as well as a shift towards collaborative approaches to innovation within companies.

On the dark side of co-design

The majority of co-design activities are far from being coherent and linear processes. We noticed that in some of the papers in this track a “dark side of co-design” emerges: collaborative creative processes, especially when they include multiple and different stakeholders, are difficult and exhausting, and not always are effective. Mahamni et al. (2018) state that, even though collaboration is essential and beneficial, it often implies conflicts in the group, business functions wrangling, snail-paced decision-making and bureaucratic complications. This occurs even more when dealing with services, which are multi-dimensional, complex, intangible and heterogeneous in nature and need the participation of numerous stakeholders. The organisation and coordination of co-design processes takes a lot of time, resources and institutional commitments, and sometimes stakeholders leave the process, leading to delays in project completion. To face this challenge, Mahamni et al. (2018) suggest a “quasi-participatory” design-approach which “enables team members to work together as well as separately, to use synchronous as well as asynchronous methods, to work concurrently from multiple locations along with the flexibility of full or partial participation”.

Vink and Oertzen (2018) highlight several risks in co-design processes and, in particular, an over-reliance on empathy. As other authors state, an over-reliance on empathy can generate single-mindedness, a present-day orientation, reinforce otherness and enhance exclusion, ironically supporting designers to design for people like themselves (Abbott, 2017; Meill, 2015; Staffer, 2015; Wendt, 2017). As a possible solution, Vink and Oertzen (2018 - 22) suggest better integrating individuals with lived experience in co-creation processes. They also offer a framework “for how the processes of eliciting empathy and leveraging lived

experience can be integrated within co-creation”, highlighting several important directions for future research in this area.

There is another emerging “dark side of co-design” which arises from the reflection of Auricchio et al. (2018) about the intersection between the competencies of HR consultants and service designers. There is actually a risk that co-design processes just become team building accelerators, without achieving the main goal of the profession, which is to co-design solutions. As Selloni (2017) and Manzini (2016) also point out, this opens up the issue that co-design processes may be interpreted as mere collective performances that achieve no particular objective, actually transforming designers into moderators and entertainers of “nice events”.

Co-producing services as sharing and collaborating

Themes related to co-production are emerging in a limited number of contributions, and mainly refer to the recognition and the empowerment of individuals within professional networks and local communities, the role of technology in supporting the sharing of resources and the growth of relationships and the nature of trust-building processes in favouring a collaborative environment.

Moving from analogy to social innovation, Carrera et al. (2018) investigate the potential of nurturing existing recovery oriented initiatives as promising practices for the re-orientation of mental healthcare provision: “*recovery* oriented and co-produced practices can favour the shift from a traditional top-down culture to a more collaborative one, with a higher level of involvement of both patients and professionals”.

Co-production is here introduced as a collaborative process, based on reciprocity and mutuality within multidisciplinary teams and considering people as “having human assets, resources and networks that go far beyond their institutional roles” (ibidem). This process of empowering people cannot omit the creation of a safe space for experimentation and change. Indeed, the authors argue how it is “only after building some evidence on co-production values and negotiating this experimentation space that the design intervention could start working on the enabling solutions” (ibidem). Finally they highlight the importance of developing dedicated co-design tools to sustain such processes.

The involvement of users’ knowledge and resources as fundamental ingredients of the co-production of services is discussed also in terms of the capacity to generate streams of data, in both an active and passive ways. In his paper, Park (2018) introduces the process of map-making as a co-production activity that can lead to the generation of innovative collaborative services. By presenting a case study developed in response to a call of the Transport for London, Park investigates how the collection, integration and use of users’ data can enable the ideation of innovative services aimed to reduce urban pollution and improve the efficiency in taxi transportation. Within this framework, citizens are increasingly shifting their role from passive users of cartography to generators of datasets and ultimately to co-producers of maps, by voluntary knowledge-sharing at a hyperlocal scale. Maps have therefore the potential to become a participative service platform, facilitating the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, who co-exist and live the urban scale and can benefit from a co-design approach.

On the transformative potential that technology may have within the sharing and collaborating framework, Overkamp et al. (2018) investigate “potential effects of technology introduction on value co-creation from a multi-actor perspective prior to the deployment of technology”. Based on the discussion of two illustrative cases, the authors provide five contextual factors that function as guidelines to assess transferability of research knowledge to, from or between projects. Moreover they suggest that “vocabulary for roles and role change from Role Theory literature helps researchers and designers to articulate and make

sense of what service actors anticipate as effects of technology deployment on value co-creation” (ibidem).

A second area of investigation and discussion is related to the concepts of collaborative and relational services, where the latter are defined as “an emerging new service model, deeply and profoundly based on the quality of interpersonal relations between participants” (Cipolla and Manzini, 2009). These peculiar forms of service are discussed in relation to the potential of the design discipline to create the conditions that favour the blurring of traditional roles, empowering users to become co-producers and to sustain collaborative systems, which nurture personal relationships as drivers of local change.

More specifically, Ferreira de Freitas and Cipolla (2018) investigate the mechanisms of trust building in relation to the development of an online platform, designed to be “a virtual environment for conglomerates of local networks”: a “fertile environment” where collaborative and relational qualities can develop. In analysing the process connected to peer-to-peer collaborations and resources-sharing within a neighbourhood, the authors identify three possible trust building processes: towards the platform (product-service system), towards the users (peer-to-peer) and towards the local network (neighbourhood). Moreover they discuss two main directions of trust creation and their gradual and cyclical manifestation: bottom-up participation processes, where existing interpersonal relations nurture online exchanges, and top down ones, when an online platform enables and strengthens the connections between unknown users, thus opening spaces for future research on trust-building in relational services.

Bencini et al. (2018) further discuss the contribution of co-production in nourishing and strengthening relationships at a local level and in a multi-stakeholder dimension. By introducing the notion of gifts as “ devices able to propel and catalyse interpersonal relationships” (Bencini et al., 2018), the authors developed and assessed a collaborative peer-to-peer service, named Sur, which enables the creation of a complex local network composed of designers, “craft(wo)men-makers”, givers and receivers in the co-production of personalized gifts. They argue that “personal and social relations (...) always happen through mediations” (Bencini et al., 2018), which create the operational and cultural space for the designers to operate both on a tangible (the gift) and intangible (the service) dimension.

Democracy, power and empowerment in sharing and collaborating.

Questions of democracy, power relationships and empowerment in sharing and collaboration are discussed in a limited number of papers in the track.

Carr (2018) and Schmitt-Rüth et al. (2018) focus particularly on how co-designerly approaches in service design can provide space to vulnerable groups and marginal voices in the development of new solutions and services. Both the papers focus on the design process highlighting the importance of creating and adapting tools to participants’ abilities and characteristics and of choosing settings that might put them at ease. They also stress the importance of collaborating with different professionals and integrating different forms of knowledge throughout the process. There is also attention to ethical aspects and particularly to attitudes and values that designers might need to develop in order to engage in these kinds of processes.

Salinas et al. (2018) describe how service design has been at play in a process aiming to identify opportunities for civic engagement in local decision-making processes. Here, civil servants together with design researchers have been using service design approaches to map and understand a local-council decision-making process and highlighting opportunities for civic participation in these processes.

All three papers focus very much on service design approaches, they also highlight the importance of developing alliances and strong collaborations between service designers and other professionals who might offer support in navigating specific challenges and questions related to participation.

Final considerations and future challenges

Collaboration is a multifaceted construct that merits reflection on its actual effectiveness in generating relevant services (co-designed services), producing implementable solutions (co-produced services) and introducing more democratic yet effective methods of working (co-creation as a service).

As stated, some papers highlight the “dark side of co-design”: organising and coordinating co-design processes, especially when dealing with multiple and different stakeholders, may be very demanding compared to the quality of the outputs. The majority of papers focus on the process rather than on results, and we noticed especially a great emphasis on tools, which, in some cases, is very sophisticated but at the same time tends to lack reflection on what these tools did actually generate. We believe that, when speaking of co-design, the discussion on tools has reached a certain level of redundancy and a more balanced reflection between “process” and “results” needs to be made, especially in these times in which co-design activities are popping up all over the world under various labels.

However, as Meroni et. al (2018) state, despite the entanglement of collaborative design processes, the design of complex socio-technical artefacts, such as services, calls for engagement and participation. Manzini (2016) states that “co-design is a complex, contradictory, sometimes antagonistic process, in which different stakeholders (design experts included) propose their specific skills and culture. It is a social conversation in which everybody is allowed to bring ideas and take action, even though these ideas and actions could, at times, generate problems and tensions (p. 58)”. Here, Manzini identifies a co-design space that reflects the increasing complexity of service design, which deals with value constellations and service ecosystems characterised by multi-player networks, largely interdependent but collaborating out of need (Sangiorgi et al., 2017).

This is why it is important to research into a co-design approach that could become a standard for most services and might help organisations to develop the social infrastructures that empower individuals to creatively and continuously support each other and take projects forward (van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2017). It is not by chance that Meroni et. al (2018) talk about “massive codesign processes (...) which are likely to become the new standard in improving results and which will, hopefully, increase the level of transparency, accountability and democracy of today’s (service) design projects”.

In this perspective, sharing and collaborating when it comes to stakeholder involvement in the co-production of services has been investigated mainly according to the relational qualities that could both reinforce and be nourished by collaborative services, and to the value that is co-produced and that unfolds more in the long-term perspective than in immediate results. A deeper and more extended reflection on the impacts of such processes is needed, especially if we consider that most of the papers investigate projects mainly focusing on what Ehn (2008) defines as “design before use”, which extends to include the start-up phase of a service. They do not, however, cover a longer period of time, when co-producers are independently running, managing and hypothetically adapting a collaborative service. Observation should therefore also move on to a more mature generation of services, which should comprise a propedeutical codesign phase, in order to consider the real transformative potential of co-production on sustainable service models and stakeholders relationships.

A further consideration takes into account the role of ICT and, in wider terms, of technology as enabler or barrier to co-production, and as a support to the transformative potential of this kind of process. Within the track, very few papers have discussed such a topic, and mainly in terms of online peer-to-peer platforms, opening space for further discussion on the role of technologies in empowering people in co-designing, delivering and managing services and on the conditions that enable an effective and long-lasting collaborative approach.

Finally, as regards users as co-producers, there is an initial tentative to discuss the recognition of vulnerable groups of users in contributing to the production of services. The paths for their involvement and empowerment challenge designers to both adapt tools and processes, but also to be able to identify unusual and marginal stakeholders. This strictly connects with issues of social inclusion, democracy and participation.

As already pointed out, questions of democracy, representation and empowerment are only marginally discussed among the papers in the track. Where they are considered, these questions are particularly discussed in relation to two focuses. The first one regards service designers and their own practice and it entails a reflection about how service design processes can be adapted and further developed to focus on the involvement (and empowerment) of participants and, particularly, of weaker stakeholders. The second focus regards the possible role of service design in the growing interest towards co-production in the public sector. Particularly, the reflection is on how service design could support civil servants and other professionals in dealing with sharing and collaboration, by providing both practical approaches and formats that support reflection on questions of participation.

The first focus points towards opportunities to reflect about democratic aspects in the service design practice. The second focus highlights the role of service design in a broader context, and it particularly opens up the question of what kind of role the service design field might play in relation to a public sector that is increasingly interested in and working with sharing and collaborative approaches. Both the focuses point at how sharing and collaborative processes and services entail political questions related to representation, control and power relationships among the people involved. Thus, the question is, how the service design community might relate to and find ways to navigate these questions in its own practice and in its relationships with public and private actors.

The increase in participatory cultures is leading to the spread of collaborative and sharing processes and services in different realms. These processes and services are often framed as a matter of empowering users and citizens and providing them with new opportunities for creating their own solutions and/or firmly influencing the way services are designed and delivered. Yet, the rhetoric of democratization and empowerment are often contradicted by the reality of these services and processes, which, instead, are often presenting issues of representation, control and power.

Within the service design community, there is a preliminary understanding and interest towards how it might be possible to create more inclusive and democratic design processes through collaboration and sharing, as well as supporting reflection and discussions in relation to questions of decision making and control in sharing and collaborative initiatives. Yet, these reflections are still quite marginal within our community and still focus on opportunities rather than addressing possible challenges and criticalities of dealing with processes that aim for democratization and empowerment of users and/or citizens. At the same time, as the popularity of this track showed, the service design community is increasingly interested in and working with sharing and collaboration.

Thus, we see the opportunity of developing a research agenda that aims at addressing the political concerns of sharing and collaboration. The focus would be on understanding and navigating questions of representation, control and power within service design processes characterized by sharing and collaboration. Moreover it would be important to address how

service design practice for sharing and collaboration intersects and contributes to a larger societal development.

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ServDes, the Service Design and Innovation conference, is the premier research conference for exchanging knowledge within Service Design and service innovation studies. Born as a yearly Nordic conference, ServDes has now become a bi-annual international event with the aim of bringing researchers and practitioners together to discuss, share and evolve the emerging discipline of Service Design, and design-related service innovation.

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