

Designing Smart Textile Services through value networks, team mental models and shared ownership

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Smart Textile Services

Designing and Selling 'Soft Product' – 'Valuable Service' systems



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ServDes 2012 in Espoo, Finland



While it was freezing in Holland the [ServDes conference](#) (Service Design and Innovation Conference) took place from 8 – 10 February in an even colder Helsinki. We participated in this conference to learn about state-of-the-art in service design research and to present our article. We appreciated the mix between people from research and industry; this made it a

conference with a diverse and interesting mix of guests. Many of the questions and discussions were dealing with the early stages of the service design process. How to prototype a service experience before it is created? How to conduct research to tailor a service experience better to a user/community/group of stakeholders? What we missed in the presentations and discussions is the actual knowledge generated about the implementation of services. How do you really translate a bunch of post-its into a service experience? Examples of case studies in which the work of service designers is being evaluated and used to show novel insights.

Some experiences

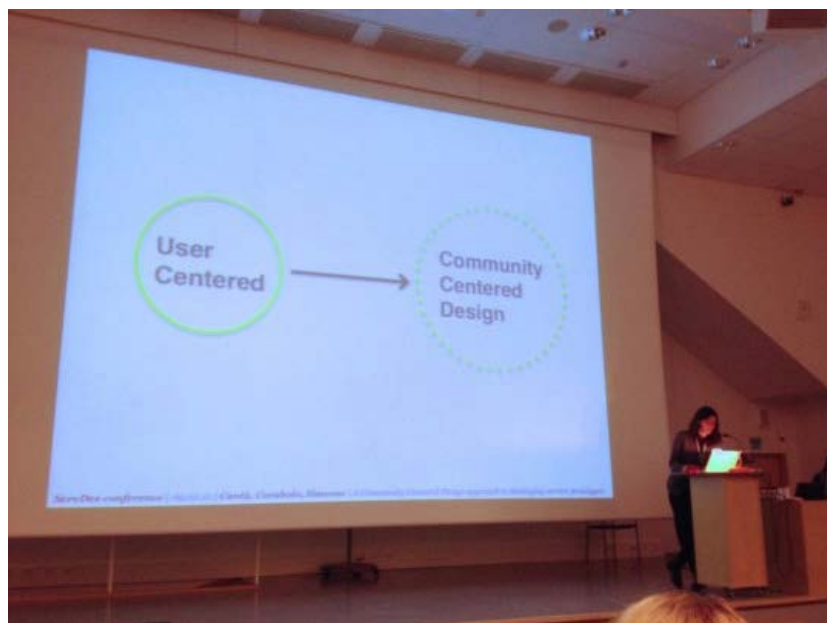
During the pre-conference day participants were randomly selected to participate in several workshops organized by service design consultancies and researchers. For example a workshop about theatrical methods to design and analyze service experiences by [WorkPlayExperience](#). One of the lessons was to create an excitement curve as it is often used in James Bond movies: the Boom! wow, wow, wow, BOOM!!” curve (big opening, a series of episodes and a final spectacle). By following this curve services (and any other experience) would result in more memorable experiences. A workshop from Laurea researchers was aimed at opening up the customer experience for higher-level management by creating service stories. [Fjord](#) organized a workshop in which the participants helped to generate ideas for services which will improve the experience of a visit to the WeeGee museum.



Workshop in Aleksander Theater building

The research day started with a keynote from Chris Pearson about the [Cambridge Service Alliance](#). In this alliance they are interested in new approaches to complex service systems. This ranges from finding out methods for the “servitization of manufacturing companies” to communicating insights to higher management. Their work mainly focuses on larger corporate stakeholders and based on the presentation offers less practical handles to implement in the Smart Textiles consortium.

Daria Cantu from Politecnico de Milano presented the [paper](#) in which she showed their approach to community centered design applied in the project “Feeding Milan”. This method transforms users in “co-producers” and helps them to co-design the service together with food producers, for example by letting the users interview the producers. For our project the Community Centered Design methods provide insight into how we can set up such a “Living Lab” in which the distance between user and manufacturer is closer, and we can test services in the real setting.



From user centered to community centered design

Mattias Arvola from Linköping University presented their [work](#) about evaluating service experiences using the service walkthrough method. This method is based on embodied prototyping methods such as bodystorming, experience prototyping and pluralistic walkthrough (acting out scenarios using low fidelity prototypes). Although it was not easy to facilitate this method (the complexity of dealing with many props during the test), it helped them to test the logic of all the steps of the service. However, it didn't convey the total service experience as much as they intended. In our process we will also have the need to evaluate our service, we have to think about the fidelity of our prototypes and protocols to convey the service experience.

In the paper "Deep inside friendly territory" Frens Pries presented a method to enable researchers to conduct studies in environments that are normally difficult to explore as a researcher. For example: the experience of flight attendants on long distance flights. By instructing normal passengers to conduct this research data can be collected and later analyzed by the researcher. They call this method "remote co-research".



Remote co-research to conduct research in different context

In our own presentation titled “[Designing Smart Textile Services through value networks, team mental models and shared ownership](#)” we talked about the concepts we used to approach the Smart Textile Service project. We showed our co-design activities and our plans for future research directions. Feedback and questions were asked about the team mental model, wouldn't it be more useful to apply a theory which is more dynamic to this topic? (for example grounding), and how do boundary objects relate to this research? Further people were interested in how this project related to the FabLab initiatives.



Smart Textile Services presentation during ServDes

In the final workshop researchers from different Service Design programs (Hazel White (University of Dundee), Stefan Holmlid (Linköping University), Elena Pacenti (Domus Academy) and Birgit Mager (Köln International School Of Design) asked the question “[What Do Tomorrow’s Service Designers Need to Know?](#)”. Some of the more obvious skills were the ability to integrate, to be a generalist, to have good social skills. The largest take-away for me is that many people in this workshop attribute a huge responsibility to the service designer. A question we should ask as well is if this is realistic and if it is even desired for a design to have so much control over the total design process of a service.



Thinking about the skill-set of tomorrow’s service designer

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