



Beyond Necessity, the Beauty of Service

A moral imperative: beautiful futures

Excessively business-minded and overly practical approaches to service design may well prove harmful to the whole field. Far too often, service design is used as a moniker for a method-oriented line of work that remains ignorant of the expertise, needs, operations, and opportunities of service designers' clients. This is troublesome, as the core promise of service design extends far beyond the reach of buzzwords or marketing gimmicks. Cheap and method-oriented usage of the concept threatens to undermine the whole discipline.

Our constantly changing operational environment sets new horizons for designers: only by systematically forecasting and inventing the futures can we prove our usefulness and develop distinguishable know-how. Only by self-criticism and holistic understanding can a service designer rise to operate in the societal level.

Service design is certainly a very transdisciplinary field. Then again, we should warmly welcome more professionals from other disciplines to work with (service) designers to enrich the whole field with fresh viewpoints and ideas. In his article "New Service Design Thinking in the Ubiquitous Media" (see page 34) Dr. Kaivo-oja discusses the ubiquitous society and the possibilities it generates; he talks about the challenge digital evolution poses to service design, media houses, and journalism.

In "Discovering the Beautiful in 'Service as Expression'" (see page 41), Kipum Lee offers further intellectual approaches. He gently promotes the shift from the self-evident, clinical, and practical to the artistic and the unexpected. Lee says we have lost sight of the poetic.

Searching "True beauty" (see page 20), J. Paul Neeley suggests a New Kind of Design in *Anytime we consider anything less than everything, we are missing something*: "As we radically expand our scale and scope, we start to see new paths to understanding the realities of the complex world that we design within."

Recognising aesthetics as a branch of philosophy, Grove and Dorsch contemplate on the nature of art, beauty, and taste (and, by the way, critique). Harviainen and Viskari-Perttu as well as Block, Wong, and Beacock present practical cases that provide a glimpse of the field for anyone less familiar with service design.

Beauty always escapes definitions. It has a universal extent and, on the other hand, strong cultural roots. Beauty unmask itself abruptly; it appears when context and the beholder's history, know-how, and personality encounter. This is why 'experience design' seems such a strange idea to me. Indeed, there is a common conceptual mistake regarding the whole concept. Namely, the experiences of an individual – let alone a group – cannot be designed. Experiences are lived through each individual's own history, beliefs, and understanding. They may be affected by designed service environments and processes, but no experience is an outcome of brand communication or service design.

Beauty is part of meaningful living. When one tries to ignore its delicate power and surrounds himself with numbers, the aesthetic transcends towards the nondescript and unknown in-betweens.

In the near future smart, mediated, contextual, and adjustable environments as well as digitalisation, robotisation, wearable technology, semantic web & internet of things, etc. offer us a whole new landscape for personalised services and aesthetics.

But better futures are yet to be invented. Perhaps service designers could take a leading role discussing the futures, inventing the futures, and quickly put best ideas into practice in a way that allows the aesthetic to prevail.

Jari Koskinen for the editorial Board

Birgit Mager is professor for service design at Köln International School of Design (KISD), Cologne, Germany. She is co-founder and president of Service Design Network and chief editor of Touchpoint.

Jesse Grimes has thirteen years experience as an interaction designer and consultant, now specialising in service design. He has worked in London, Copenhagen, Düsseldorf and Sydney, and is now based in Amsterdam with Dutch agency Informaat.

Pia Betton links design thinking to business. She has worked with brands such as Audi and VW, Lego, Carlsberg, Nokia and Novo Nordisk – identifying new business opportunities and increasing their innovation power. Pia joined Edenspiekermann (Berlin) in 2011

Jari Koskinen currently concentrates on participatory foresight and co-design at AlternativeFutures. He endorses self-reflective and intellectual approaches that capacitate service designers to operate in the societal level.

Lara Penin is assistant professor at Parsons the New School for Design, where she coordinates the Area of Study of Service Design at the Integrated Design Program. Lara is also co-founder of Parsons DESIS Lab.