SERVDES 2023

COPPE | UFRJ Universidade Federal Do Rio De Janeiro
DAD | PUC-Rio Pontifícia Universidade Católica Do Rio De Janeiro
Livework

# Service design education and new paradigm shift in a changing world

| Convenor Name | E-mail | Affiliation | Workshop role |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Nicola Morelli | nmor@create.aau.dk | Aalborg University | Leader |
| Satu Miettinen | satu.miettinen@ulapland.fi | University of Lapland | Leader |
| Mari Suoheimo | mari.suoheimo@aho.no | The Oslo School of Architecture and Design | Leader |

## Abstract

Designers face a world of emergencies of crises through disasters, wars, refugees, and pandemic. The elements of the crisis are not purely technical or related to the quantity of available resources left on the planet: the crisis is also in society, in its inequalities, in the gap between social groups, genders, opportunities, social and economic conditions, not only between countries, but also within countries, in the same city, or in the same neighborhood. We see that designers, whose activity is embedded in the existing production and consumption system, are no longer a part of the solution, but rather a part of the problem of sustainability.

In this is a thematic workshop there will be discussed about the role or position of service design in the world that is in crises and in constant change. We see that there is a need to review the current paradigms how design is being educated today. While design research is clearly looking for a paradigm change, design education has often kept a conservative position.

In the workshop we wish to open discussion in the following questions: Can fundamental principles of liberal economy be overcome? For instance, is there an alternative to profit to evaluate design innovation? Are there alternative currencies that can measure social qualities? Is this currency equally valid when working for

SERVDES 2023

COPPE | UFRJ Universidade Federal Do Rio De Janeiro
DAD | PUC-Rio Pontifícia Universidade Católica Do Rio De Janeiro
Livework

private and public sectors (and should those sectors be considered as separated)? Is the concept of social quality the same in different cultural contexts?

1. **Thematic workshops** (1.5hrs): This is a thematic workshop

Keywords: service design, paradigm, crises, sustainability (maximum 4 keywords)

## Workshop description

For many years, the convergence of many environmental, social and cultural factors has been pointing to the need for a radical review of the existing models that orient our economy, social life, culture and relationship with the planet.

The call for a radical change (Meadows and Club of, 1972; Meadows et al., 1992; WCED, 1987) has hardly been heard by a large part of the world population, enmeshed by the more attractive perspective of a society based on unlimited consumption. The urgency of a transition beyond this model was evident since the beginning of this century, but only the quick sequence of two major global crises, the pandemic and the Ukraine war (not the first or the only war, but certainly the most impacting on the present production and consumption system both in European countries and in large part of the Global South), brought the need for transition in the spotlight of public debate.

For the first time, the question of how to save humanity from the destruction of its vital resources is intertwining with relevant phenomena, such as energy crises, climate migrations, and resource use, as part of a single large problem.

In this perspective, the adaptation of the existing human system cannot produce any valid solution. The change has to be larger and must require a perspective transformation, a paradigm shift.

- *Position and role of the service design discipline in the crisis*

The discipline of design has long debated this issue, supporting a repositioning of design through experiments and research. Designers, whose activity is embedded in the existing production and consumption system, are no longer a part of the solution, but rather a part of the problem of sustainability.

The elements of the crisis are not purely technical or related to the quantity of available resources left on the planet: the crisis is also in society, in its inequalities, in the gap between social groups, genders, opportunities, social and economic

SERVDES 2023

COPPE | UFRJ Universidade Federal Do Rio De Janeiro
DAD | PUC-Rio Pontifícia Universidade Católica Do Rio De Janeiro
Livework

conditions, not only between countries, but also within countries, in the same city, or in the same neighborhood.

Because of its user and human centeredness, the service design is often touching those themes, which are at the border line between the most consolidated paradigm of the production and consumption system and explorative studies of possible new paradigms, in which the fundamental rules of the liberal system may no longer be adequate.

Design needs to rediscuss its positioning, looking beyond the solution of functional problems. It can no longer maintain a "technical neutrality" with respect to the crises emerging in this period of change; it needs to find new ways to contribute to the cultural and social development of societies, to the interaction among people, to the communication, the transformation or the preservation of fundamental values. It is crucial for design to discuss its role in the possible transition towards new models. This has become evident in the debate within design research, where the role of designers has been projected towards the solution of environmental issues, the hypothesis of new development models, or the suggestion of cases of social innovation, all aimed not only to find new solutions but also to make hypotheses of how new development models could be supported. The new positioning could find its pillars in the conceptual shifts between consumption and utilization (Stahel, 1994), value creation and value exchange (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). But the ground for such a shift has not been fully explored: can fundamental principles of liberal economy be overcome? For instance, is there an alternative to profit to evaluate design innovation? Are there alternative currencies that can measure social qualities? Is this currency equally valid when working for private and public sectors (and should those sectors be considered as separated)? Is the concept of social quality the same in different cultural contexts?

Design, and specifically service design research, are therefore looking at possible futures that will imply a paradigm change that could address the challenge of the present crises.

- The paradigm change and design education

While design research is clearly looking for a paradigm change, design education has often kept a conservative position. The need to *professionalise* educational programs, i.e. to adequate them to a specific demand (often supposed as coinciding with private companies) for design skills, or even the need to generate consistent professional profiles across different countries educational programs leads design education towards more rigid schemes, based on consolidated methodological approaches and on the assumption of 'technical' nature of the education, which

results in neutrality of educational program in respect to the urgency for radical social and environmental transitions.

Educational programs are still very much based on a profile of designers as problem solvers, whereas the hypothesis of a transition implies a change that cannot be free from conflicts, tensions, agonism, chaos and complexity. A change limited to technical "solutions" would miss the connections between technical, social, cultural, behavioral, economic, and political issues.

The workshop participants will discuss the possibility of introducing new parameters to evaluate the quality of service design and new teaching strategies to support transition.

## Session set-up

Session 1 (20 minutes) group discussion on the parameters for transition

Session 2 Presentation and open discussion (15 minutes)

Session 3 Methods and tools to introduce those parameters in SD education (30 minutes)

Session 4 Presentation and open discussion (20 minutes)

Wrap up and propositions (5 minutes)

## Space requirements

- Tables and chairs for all the attendees to work on their prototypes and a couple of extra tables to display the prototyping materials
- A projector for visual support

## References (APA)

Lusch, R., & Vargo, S. (2014). Service Dominant Logic. Premises, Perspectives, Possibilities. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Meadows, D. H., & Club of, R. (1972). The limits to growth : a report for The Club of Rome's project on the predicament of mankind. London: Earth Island.

Meadows, D. H., Meadows, D. L., & Randers, J. (1992). Beyond the limits : global collapse or a sustainable future. London: Earthscan Publications.

Stahel, W. R. (1994). The Utilisation-focused Service Economy: Resource Efficiency and Product-Life Extension. In R. D. J. Alenby Braden R (Ed.), *The Greening of Industrial Ecosystems* Washington D.C: National Academy Press. https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/2129/chapter/17.

WCED. (1987). Our Common Future. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Convenors bio:

**Convenor 1**: Nicola Morelli currently works at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology, Aalborg University. Nicola's research focuses on service design and social innovation. He is also involved in projects on design driven innovation in the urban context, design for migration, design for urban mobility and for increasing citizens' accessibility to open data.

**Convenor 2**: Satu Miettinen is a Dean (2018-) and a Professor of Service Design (2016-) at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland in Finland. She has worked as an expert in various national committees: The Scientific Committee for the National Audit Office, several committees at the Ministry of Finance and steering committee for the Design Finland Programme.

**Convenor 3**: Mari Suoheimo is working as an associate professor in service design at the Oslo School of Architecture and design. Her research is concentrated in how to approach wicked problems in service design. Suoheimo has publications in the following journals: the Design Journal, Processes, the International Journal of Design Management and Professional Practice, and Revista Educação Gráfica.