

# 02

# WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

Setting out the basics: what service designers do, and what they don't.

### Expert comments

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# 02

## WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

<b>2.1 Defining service design</b> .....	<b>19</b>	<b>2.4 What service design isn't</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>2.2 Different views</b> .....	<b>21</b>	2.4.1 It is not simply aesthetics or “putting lipstick on a pig” .....	24
2.2.1 Service design as a mindset.....	21	2.4.2 It is not simply “customer service” .....	24
2.2.2 Service design as a process .....	21	2.4.3 It is not simply “service recovery” .....	24
2.2.3 Service design as a toolset.....	21	<b>2.5 The principles of service design, revisited</b> .....	<b>25</b>
2.2.4 Service design as a cross-disciplinary language.....	22	2.5.1 The original .....	25
2.2.5 Service design as a management approach.....	22	2.5.2 The new .....	26
<b>2.3 Origins and progress</b> .....	<b>23</b>		

### This chapter also includes

Service design and service-dominant logic 29

The 12 Commandments of Service Design Doing 32

## 2.1 DEFINING SERVICE DESIGN

Service design can help solve some important challenges faced by organizations. You hold a book in your hand which tells you how to do service design. But what does that term mean? It is something about customer experience, and innovation, and collaboration – but does it include everything related to those concepts, or is it just part of those worlds? Is every activity concerned with creating, planning, fixing, and shaping services part of “service design”? Do service designers even agree on what they do? Some people like to start with a definition, so in mid-2016 we asked 150 service designers to share and vote on their favorites. Here are the most popular:

- “Service design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organizations. It is a new holistic, multi-disciplinary, integrative field.” – *Stefan Moritz*<sup>01</sup>
- “Service design is the application of established design process and skills to the development of services. It is a creative and practical way to improve existing services and innovate new ones.” – *live|work*<sup>02</sup>

<sup>01</sup> Moritz, S. (2005). *Service Design: Practical Access to an Evolving Field*. Köln.

<sup>02</sup> live|work (2010). “Service Design.” Retrieved 10 August 2010 from <http://www.livework.co.uk>.

- “Service design is all about making the service you deliver useful, usable, efficient, effective and desirable.” – *UK Design Council*<sup>03</sup>
- “Service design choreographs processes, technologies and interactions within complex systems in order to co-create value for relevant stakeholders.” – *Birgit Mager*<sup>04</sup>
- “[Service design is] design for experiences that happen over time and across different touchpoints.” – *Simon Clatworthy, quoting servicedesign.org*<sup>05</sup>
- “When you have 2 coffee shops right next to each other, selling the exact same coffee at the exact same price, service design is what makes you walk into the one and not the other, come back often and tell your friends about it.” – *31Volts*<sup>06</sup>

<sup>03</sup> UK Design Council (2010). “What Is Service Design?” Retrieved 10 August 2010 from <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-design/types-of-design/service-design/what-is-service-design/>.

<sup>04</sup> See for example “Meet Birgit Mager, President of the Service Design Network.” Retrieved 3 August 2017 from <https://www.service-design-network.org>.

<sup>05</sup> [servicedesign.org](http://www.servicedesign.org) is no longer accessible, but see Clatworthy, S. (2011). “Service Innovation through Touchpoints: Development of an Innovation Toolkit for the First Stages of New Service Development.” *International Journal of Design*, 5(2), 15–28.

<sup>06</sup> See 31Volts, “Service Design” (original quote from 2008 extended in 2016). Retrieved 3 August 2017 from <http://www.31volts.com/en/service-design/>.

And the **most popular definition** with our panel of 150 colleagues:

**COMMENT**

“Lumpers will often argue it is all about the mindset. Being open, empathetic, asking questions, starting with ‘I don’t know,’ and learning by doing. You can call yourself anything you like, but if you share this mindset you are a service design thinker ... or rather a service design do-er.”

– **Arne van Oosterom**

→ “Service design helps organizations see their services from a customer perspective. It is an approach to designing services that balances the needs of the customer with the needs of the business, aiming to create seamless and quality service experiences. Service design is rooted in design thinking, and brings a creative, human-centered process to service improvement and designing new services. Through collaborative methods that engage both customers and service delivery teams, service design helps organizations gain true, end-to-end understanding of their services, enabling holistic and meaningful improvements.”<sup>01</sup>

– **crowdsourced by Megan Erin Miller**

Many service design tools are mind hacks that help us reframe problems in a way that humans can handle better. We shape slippery data into human forms and visual stories which we can understand from any viewpoint – technical, specialist, or simply empathic. Instead of designing complex systems directly, we try to answer simple “How might we ...?” questions. And rather than trying to interpret each other’s words, we communicate by building prototypes.

<sup>01</sup> Miller, M. E. (2015, December 14). “How Many Service Designers Does it Take to Define Service Design?” at <https://blog.practicalservicedesign.com>.

**Other names**

Listen in on a group of service design practitioners – whether they consider themselves “designers” or not – and you will hear two types of conversation when it comes to terminology. Just like when paleontologists discuss taxonomy, you will find the “splitters” and the “lumpers.”

**The splitters will talk about the differences between service design, experience design, design thinking, holistic UX, user-centered design, human-centered design, new marketing, and even more.**

The lumpers will point out that these approaches have far more in common than they have differences, and suggest that names matter far less than the principles that these practices all share. The authors of this book belong very firmly in the “lumpers” camp. Honestly, we don’t care what you call it, as long as you are doing.

## 2.2 DIFFERENT VIEWS

Service design can be explained in many ways. In different situations, each of these can be useful – or misleading.

Each one, however, is only part of the picture.

### 2.2.1 Service design as a mindset

If a mindset is a collection of attitudes that determine our responses to various situations, service design can easily be thought of as the mindset of a group of people or even an entire organization. A group with a service design mindset will talk about users first, will see “products” as the avatars of a service relationship, will respond to asserted assumptions by suggesting some research, will reject opinions and endless discussion in favor of testing prototypes, and will not consider a project finished until it is implemented and already generating insights for the next iteration. As a mindset, service design is pragmatic, co-creative, and hands-on; it looks for a balance between technological opportunity, human need, and business relevance.

### 2.2.2 Service design as a process

Design is a verb, so service design is often described as a process. The process is driven by the design mindset, trying to find elegant and innovative solutions through

iterative cycles of research and development. Iteration – working in a series of repeating, deepening, explorative loops – is absolutely central, so practitioners aim for short cycles at the outset, with early user feedback, early prototyping, and quick-and-dirty experiments. As the process continues, the iteration may slow down but it never goes away, as prototypes iterate into pilots and pilots iterate into implementation.

### 2.2.3 Service design as a toolset

Ask anyone to imagine service design, and they will usually imagine a tool – perhaps a customer journey map hanging on the wall, or simply people pointing at sticky notes. Those templates and tools sum up service design in many people’s thoughts. Talk about tools seems to dominate talk about service design, so it’s tempting to imagine service design as a sort of toolbox, filled with fairly lightweight and approachable tools adopted from branding, marketing, UX, and elsewhere. This is not the whole story, by any means – without a process, mindset, and even common language, those tools lose much of their impact and may even make no sense. Used well, however, the tools can spark meaningful conversations; create a common understanding; make implicit knowledge, opinions, and assumptions explicit; and stimulate the development of a common language.

One of the main aims of service design, or design thinking, or whatever we call it, is to break down silos and help people co-create. Do we want to set up our own silos at the same time, saying “This is service design,” “That is design thinking,” “This is UX,” and so on? That makes no sense.

### 2.2.4 Service design as a cross-disciplinary language

#### COMMENT

“Everyone likes to focus on processes and toolsets because they can see, touch, and use them. But without the service design *mindset*, people go right back to employing the processes and tools just like they used BPM and other ‘improvement’ approaches. Then they end up with the same internally focused solutions with the same awful customer experiences they have today.”

– Jeff McGrath

Service design is almost dogmatically co-creative, and many practitioners pride themselves on their ability to connect people from different silos, bringing them together around some seemingly simple tools that they all find meaningful and useful. These tools and visualizations – sometimes called *boundary objects*<sup>01</sup> – can be interpreted in different ways by the different specialists working on them, allowing them to collaborate successfully without having to understand too much of each other’s worlds. They are simple enough to be easily – even empathically – understood, yet robust enough to provide a good working foundation. In this way, service design can be seen as a common language or even “the glue between all disciplines,”<sup>02</sup> offering a shared, approachable, and neutral set of terms and activities for cross-disciplinary cooperation.

<sup>01</sup> See the textbox *Boundary objects* in 3.2.

<sup>02</sup> Arne van Oosterom on design thinking, as written on the wall at the Design Thinkers premises in Amsterdam.

### 2.2.5 Service design as a management approach

When service design is sustainably embedded in an organization, it can be used as a management approach to both the incremental innovation of existing value propositions and radical innovation for completely new services, physical or digital products,<sup>03</sup> or even businesses. An iterative service design process always includes collaborative work in a series of loops. In this way, service design as a management approach has some similarities to other iterative management processes.<sup>04</sup> However, service design differs through using more human-centric key performance indicators, more qualitative research methods, fast and iterative prototyping methods for both experiences and business processes, and a specific approach to leadership. Its inclusion of internal stakeholders and view across the customer journey often results in changes to organizational structure and systems.<sup>05</sup>

<sup>03</sup> The term “products” describes anything a company offers – no matter if this is tangible or not. In academia, products are often divided into goods and services. However, products are usually bundles of services and physical/digital products. As “goods” is colloquially understood as referring to something tangible, we prefer to speak of physical/digital products. Read more on this in the textbox on *Service-dominant logic* in 2.1.

<sup>04</sup> Compare a service design process, for example, with the iterative four-step “PDCA” (Plan–Do–Check–Adjust, or sometimes also Plan–Do–Check–Act) management process. This is often used in business for project management and the continuous improvement of processes, products, or services. While both PDCA and service design processes describe an iterative sequence, PDCA focuses on improving defined KPIs that can be measured quantitatively. This means iterations only occur from loop to loop, but not within a loop. A design process, however, does not restrict iterations at any moment.

<sup>05</sup> Read more on this in Chapter 12, *Embedding service design in organizations*.

## 2.3 ORIGINS AND PROGRESS

### COMMENT

“Today, design plays a major role in solving wicked problems. Organizations are trying to use the capabilities of design to move beyond the given and to infuse a different way of working and thinking into systems.

Often referred to as *design thinking* or *service design*, commercial organizations all over the world hire design agencies, build in-house capacities, and merge with and buy design agencies. They create innovation labs and change the physical working environment to foster and symbolize a new way of thinking and working.”

– Birgit Mager

People – especially ones with a design school background – often speak of service design as if the term included all activities involved in planning and designing services. But if we look at the history of service design, we see that it is just one approach to working on services, one which grew out of design methodology in the 1990s and 2000s and was developed by designers. Crucially, service designers represent only one of many professions that create and shape services, including systems engineering, marketing and branding, operations management, customer service, and “the organization.”

That list of important service makers comes from Brandon Schauer of Adaptive Path, who back in 2011 did some rough calculations<sup>06</sup> and estimated that around \$2 billion was spent each year in the United States on the planning and design of services, but only \$70 million (about 3.5%) of this was spent on “service design.” The other 96.5% of the work was done by people who did not consider themselves service designers, and had possibly never heard the term.

Things are changing. More recently, customer experience has become overwhelmingly important for many organizations, and design (more usually, “design thinking”) has become a key innovation and management methodology. Sitting firmly at the intersection of design thinking and customer experience, service

design is now more visible than ever. Service, as it is traditionally defined, is often said to make up the lion’s share of most developed economies.<sup>07</sup> And design is the process of making sure something fits its purpose – so **service design can potentially be applied to the shaping of much of human activity.** At the very least, it has a place in incremental and radical service development, in innovation, in the improvement of services, in customer experience work, in education, in empowerment, in government, and in the strategy of organizations.

<sup>06</sup> Brandon Schauer, presentation at SDN conference San Francisco 2011 and available at Schauer, B. (2014). “The Business Case for (or Against) Service Design,” at <https://www.slideshare.net>.

<sup>07</sup> From the point of view of service-dominant logic, it’s basically everything.



## 2.4 WHAT SERVICE DESIGN ISN'T

Even in closely related fields, there is confusion about what service design should and can do. So here are a few things which service design certainly is not.<sup>01</sup>

### 2.4.1 It is not simply aesthetics or “putting lipstick on a pig”

The aesthetics of a service are not unimportant, but they are not the primary focus of service design. Service designers are much more concerned with whether a service works, whether it fulfills a need and creates value, than details of what it looks or sounds like. The aesthetics can be a part of those questions, but only a part.

Service design does not only address superficial, “cosmetic” aspects of services – the frontend, or the usability. In fact, service design looks not just at how a service is experienced, but also how it is delivered and even whether it should exist. It almost always goes far beyond the visible, to challenge and reshape everything from operations to the business model.

<sup>01</sup> Ask Adam about the term “service design” and he will say, “I hate-hate-hate the term. It’s made up of two simple words which most people misunderstand. ‘Service,’ they think, is being nice to customers, or fixing stuff. And ‘design,’ of course, is making things look nice. So ‘service design,’ they think, must be ... something which involves being nice to customers and making things look nice. So they smile, and nod, and walk away.”

### 2.4.2 It is not simply “customer service”

“Customer service” – the cliché in stock photos is a toothsome model with a headset – could be the subject of a service design project. We could look at the customer needs and how the hotline specialist fulfills them, how she fits into the structures of her organization, what technology she uses to help customers, and how she creates value for the organization. But we would also ask ourselves how the company’s offering might be better delivered to make her task unnecessary or unrecognizable. Service designers do not (only) solve customer problems; they design value propositions, processes, and business models.

### 2.4.3 It is not simply “service recovery”

Service design does not only come into play when things go wrong. It is not an “after sales” cost center or optional extra. Service design addresses the entire customer or employee journey, from becoming aware of a need all the way to becoming a regular customer or leaving the service relationship. It asks what service should be offered, how it should be experienced, and yes, even what happens when things go wrong. But it is fundamentally concerned with creating services that people value, not just repairing mistakes.

## 2.5 THE PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE DESIGN, REVISITED

### 2.5.1 The original

In the 2010 prequel to this book, *This is Service Design Thinking*,<sup>02</sup> the authors collected five principles of service design thinking which have been widely quoted (and misquoted) ever since. Should they be re-examined? The principles were:

#### COMMENT

“Services are co-created, in the sense that different stakeholders are involved in innovating services. Working together, understanding the way people perceive services, how they use them and how they would love to use them is a driver for change.”

– Birgit Mager

- 1 **User-centered:** Services should be experienced through the customer’s eyes.
- 2 **Co-creative:** All stakeholders should be included in the service design process.
- 3 **Sequencing:** The service should be visualized as a sequence of interrelated actions.
- 4 **Evidencing:** Intangible services should be visualized in terms of physical artifacts.
- 5 **Holistic:** The entire environment of a service should be considered.

<sup>02</sup> Stickdorn, M., & Schneider, J. (2010): *This is Service Design Thinking*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

Many of these principles have stood the test of time quite well, though they have evolved with the evolution of service design. Others bear re-examination.

Service design remains a highly “**user-centered**” approach. Some people ask, “What about the employees?” But in the 2010 version of the principles, the term “user” referred to any user of a service system, certainly including customers and staff. It might be clearer to say “human-centered,” clearly including the service provider, the customer and/or the user, as well as other stakeholders and even non-customers who are impacted by the service.

In choosing the word “**co-creative**,” the authors included two different concepts. One was the technical meaning of “co-creation” in terms of the value generated by services – a service only exists with the participation of a customer, so value is *co-created* together. The second concept was the idea of “co-design” – the process of creation by a group of people, usually from different backgrounds. People who practice service design have concentrated on this latter meaning.<sup>03</sup> They emphasize the **collaborative and cross-disciplinary nature of service design**, and the power of service design as a language to break down silos.

<sup>03</sup> Many designers use the terms “co-creation” and “co-design” interchangeably. If in doubt, it’s best to ask for more detail.

With the term “sequencing,” we were reminded of the key role of the experience in service design, and of the interplay and relationships between the various moments, steps, or “touchpoints”<sup>01</sup> that make up a service experience. Journey mapping is still the most visible and well-known tool in the field. The term “sequencing” is an unusual one which causes some people to stumble. In everyday conversations, the more common word “sequential” is often adopted.

“Evidencing” was an acknowledgment of the intangibility of many parts of a service offering, and of how we can draw attention to the value created by a service, even if the activity takes place out of sight. The classic example of evidencing has always been the folded toilet paper in a hotel bathroom, signaling to you that your room has been cleaned since the last visitor was there. Evidencing – showing value – remains an important role and motor of service design, connecting it strongly to branding.

“Holistic” was another choice that combined several concepts in one word. One was the relevance of all our senses to an experience; another was the wide variety of individual journeys that one service can engender; the last was the relevance of service design to the corporate identity and goals of the organization. Today, the word “holistic” is often used to remind us that service designers aspire to shape the entirety of a service, not just patch individual problems (though that might be a good starting point). They also aim to address the complete needs of the customer, not only superficial symptoms.

<sup>01</sup> See the textbox *Steps, touchpoints, and moments of truth* in 3.3.

## 2.5.2 The new

So what is missing in the original five principles? What has changed in service design, which is not shown here?

One key characteristic of the service design approach which we cannot see in these principles is the emphasis on *iteration* – starting with small, cheap attempts and experiments, allowing them to fail, learning from the failure, and adapting the process along the way. This is often hard for people to grasp, as many of us come from a decide-plan-do background. It is an essential characteristic of a design-led approach.

Another missing point might be service design’s pragmatic foundation on research and prototyping, not on opinions or lofty concepts. It is an essentially practical approach, as we can see when Stanford colleagues describe design thinking as having a “bias toward action,” or when participants at jamming events<sup>02</sup> wear T-shirts emblazoned with “doing, not talking” in many languages.

But perhaps the most important point not explicitly listed in 2010 is the imminent and central need for service design to be relevant to business. Although it is based on creating better experiences, it does this by understanding backstage processes and technological opportunities as well as the business goals of the organization. No service design can be successful or sustainable if it does not make sense on the spreadsheet, as well as in the sketchbook.

<sup>02</sup> The Global Service Jam (<http://www.globalservicejam.org>), an international volunteer-run design event that takes place in around 100 cities each year, has played an important part in disseminating the service design approach worldwide.

So we offer the **new principles of service design doing:**

- 1 Human-centered:** Consider the experience of all the people affected by the service.
- 2 Collaborative:** Stakeholders of various backgrounds and functions should be actively engaged in the service design process.
- 3 Iterative:** Service design is an exploratory, adaptive, and experimental approach, iterating toward implementation.
- 4 Sequential:** The service should be visualized and orchestrated as a sequence of interrelated actions.
- 5 Real:** Needs should be researched in reality, ideas prototyped in reality, and intangible values evidenced as physical or digital reality.
- 6 Holistic:** Services should sustainably address the needs of all stakeholders through the entire service and across the business.

Service design is a practical approach to the creation and improvement of the offerings made by organizations. It has much in common with several other approaches like design thinking, experience design, and user experience design, has its origins in the design studio, and harmonizes well with service-dominant logic.<sup>03</sup> **It is a human-centered, collaborative, interdisciplinary, iterative approach which uses research, prototyping, and a set of easily understood activities and visualization tools to create and orchestrate experiences that meet the needs of the business, the user, and other stakeholders.**

<sup>03</sup> While we often refer to service-dominant logic in this book, we do not understand this as a school of thought superseding other theories, but rather as a valuable component within a growing, changing, and patchy body of knowledge. As Achrol and Kotler say: "Some philosophers like Popper, Feyerabend, and Lakatos forcefully argue for theoretical diversity and against dominant paradigms [...]. Popper (1959) points out that because we never know for certain that our theories are correct, we should proliferate our theories as much as possible to encourage the growth of scientific knowledge." Achrol, R. S., & Kotler, P. (2006). "The Service-Dominant Logic for Marketing: A Critique." In R. F. Lusch & S. L. Vargo (eds.), *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions* (pp. 320-333). M.E. Sharpe, p. 331.

## The evolution of the principles of service design

# 2010

### 1. USER-CENTERED

Services should be experienced through the customer's eyes.

### 2. CO-CREATIVE

All stakeholders should be included in the service design process.

### 3. SEQUENCING

The service should be visualized as a sequence of interrelated actions.

### 4. EVIDENCING

Intangible services should be visualized in terms of physical artifacts.

### 5. HOLISTIC

The entire environment of a service should be considered.

# 2017

### 1. HUMAN-CENTERED

Consider the experience of all the people affected by the service.

### 2. COLLABORATIVE

Stakeholders of various backgrounds and functions should be actively engaged in the service design process.

### 3. ITERATIVE

Service design is an exploratory, adaptive, and experimental approach, iterating toward implementation.

### 4. SEQUENTIAL

The service should be visualized and orchestrated as a sequence of interrelated actions.

### 5. REAL

Needs should be researched in reality, ideas prototyped in reality, and intangible values evidenced as physical or digital reality.

### 6. HOLISTIC

Services should sustainably address the needs of all stakeholders through the entire service and across the business.



## Service design and service-dominant logic: A perfect match

BY MAURICIO MANHÃES

Whatever economic sector an organization operates in, its core activity is service. Whether it produces screws, shampoos, cars, or chairs, its product is a service. All these products are created through service design processes, whether organizations are aware of it or not.

To better understand these statements, we need to get to know service-dominant logic, proposed back in 2004 by marketing professors Steven Vargo and Robert Lusch.<sup>01</sup>

### Service-dominant logic

Service-dominant logic (SDL) is more than a snapshot of the current world context. It presents an interesting review of human economic history, showing clearly that “services are the beginning, middle and end”<sup>02</sup> of all economic activity. SDL offers 11 foundational premises, which are grouped under 5 insightful axioms as a

general framework to understand service (singular, as the common trait among all products) and services (plural, as the output of specific service provisions).

These five axioms are:

- 1 Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
- 2 Value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.
- 3 All social and economic actors are resource integrators.
- 4 Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.
- 5 Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.<sup>03</sup>

Put briefly, the axioms let us see all products as service, blurring the boundaries between tangible or intangible products (1). They help us understand that value can only be created through the interactions of multiple actors, which include and go beyond the obvious direct customer and the service provider (2). We also see that any service is only made possible by all the actors providing resources for it, not only the service provider (3). Products (goods and/or services) have no intrinsic values, only the ones perceived by a beneficiary (4). Finally, the co-creation of value only occurs through the coordination of human-created institutions and institutional arrangements (5).

<sup>01</sup> Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). “Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing.” *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1–17.

<sup>02</sup> Bastiat, F. (1964). “Selected Essays on Political Economy,” (1848), Seymour Cain, trans, George. B. de Huszar, ed. Reprint, Princeton, NJ; D. Van Nordstrand.

<sup>03</sup> Institutions are rules, norms, meanings, symbols, practices, and similar aides to collaboration. Institutional arrangements are assemblages of interdependent institutions. See Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). “Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(1), 5–23.

**What does this serve for?**

To help understand the axioms, let's take a look at one apparently simple product: a chair. When someone comes into contact with any object for the first time, what question does he ask? Probably "What is this for?" or "What does this serve for?" Right? So, what does a chair serve for? Is it

just a separate seat for one person? Must it have a specific form, with a back and four legs? And what if a "chair" is not meant to be a seat, but is a historical object or a work of art? Is it still a "chair"? These kinds of questions can go on indefinitely.

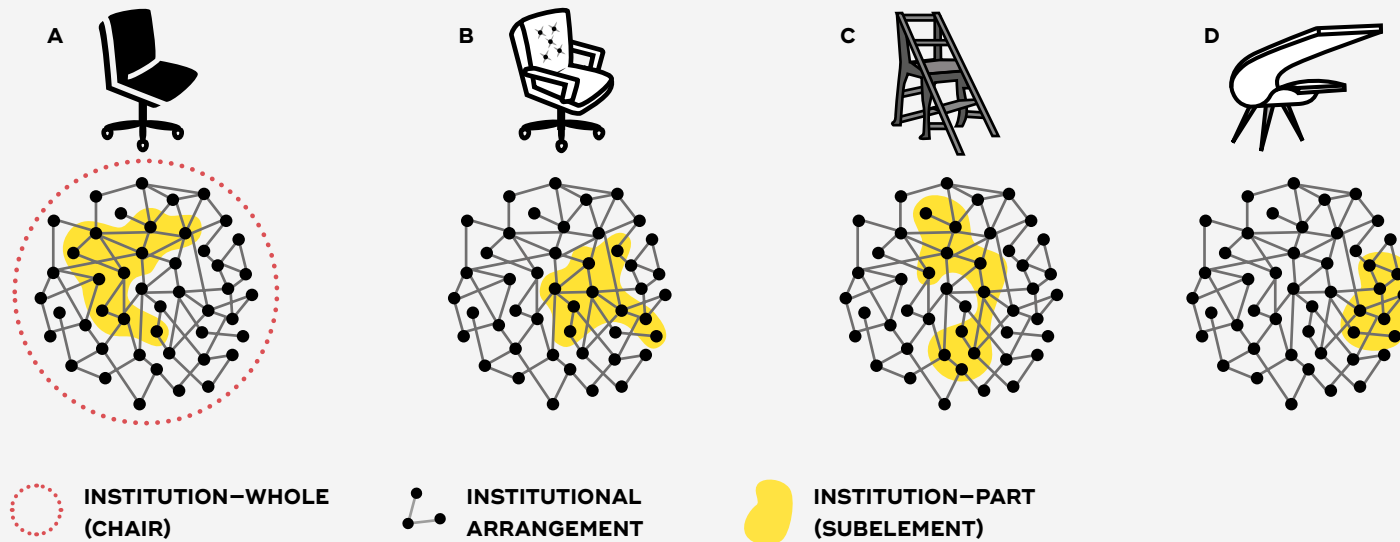
At the end, it turns out to be surprisingly difficult to define any object precisely.

Most likely, when people try to describe an object, they do it through the perceived services provided by it. It's almost impossible to objectively define any object without tapping into the possible potentials for action that we perceive it offers us.

In other words, without understanding the set of possibilities of services that can be

**What, exactly, is a "chair"?**

**It's an orchestra of possibilities, different for each beneficiary.**



provided by a certain “object,” it is not even possible to understand it. So, when the plain word “chair” is used by someone, it really represents an orchestra of possibilities, a large number of potential services, different for each beneficiary.

As shown in the picture, a chair can represent (A) an ergonomic support for working hours, (B) a symbol of status, (C) a ladder, or (D) a work of art. Are they all “chairs”?

By going back to the axioms, it becomes possible to understand a chair by understanding its potential to act – that is, the services it provides (1). These services can only be co-created by a concerted effort of a multitude of actors, like designers, engineers, production managers, decorators, salespeople, shop owners, and influencers – always including a specific beneficiary (2). As a matter of fact, a vast array of social and economic actors must integrate all sorts of resources to enable every product (good and/or service) that exists (3). What exactly each of these products is can only be determined by the perception of a specific beneficiary (4). In all these cases, the

potential services that a product provides can only be understood as a designated coordination of institutions and institutional arrangements (5). Basically, this is why all existing products were created by a service design process, whether intentional or unintentional.

### Service design

So, as well as offering an interesting review of human economic history with service at its center, SDL also sheds light on the role of service design. Specifically, it’s possible to build a definition of service design on axiom 5, stating that “service design is the process of coordinating designed institutions and institutional arrangements to enable the co-creation of value.”<sup>01</sup>

Therefore, for various reasons, **SDL is the perfect match for service design.** SDL’s constant development continues to shed light on several important aspects relating to service as a broad concept, and also on specifics of service design. As well as providing a consistent discourse to understand service, it also guides us to

perceive any product (good and/or service) as an orchestra composed of a large number of players and instruments, of a large number of potential services.

It makes the effort to designate innovative arrangements for it far clearer and more effective. In other words, it provides an immense creative energy for service design to create service innovations. This is one of the major contributions made by SDL to service design. ◀

<sup>01</sup> This is an interesting definition of service design, because it puts together a particular set of concepts: 1. “value co-creation” focuses service design on enabling value co-creation; 2. “coordination” establishes service design as a coordination process; 3. “institutions” acknowledges institutions and institutional arrangements as the fundamental and intangible structures of all designed products; and 4. “actor-generated” permits us to define design, understood as a process that delivers evolutionary actor-generated results, as the ideal process to create institutions and institutional arrangements.



# THE 12 COMMANDMENTS OF SERVICE DESIGN DOING

## 1 CALL IT WHAT YOU LIKE

Service design? Design thinking? Service design thinking? Customer-centric innovation? It doesn't matter what you call it. It matters that you do it.<sup>01</sup>

## 2 MAKE SH!TTY FIRST DRAFTS

Don't waste time on making early versions beautiful. In the early parts of a project, you are going for quantity, not quality. Ideas don't need to be complete, just good enough to be explored and thrown away. The more beautiful you make them, the harder they are to abandon. So be sh!tty, not pretty.<sup>02</sup>

## 3 YOU ARE A FACILITATOR

Your clients' knowledge beats yours – so keeping a diverse team of employees, experts, and even customers working together is the best thing a service designer can do. Help them by embracing mind hacks. Shape customer data into personas; explain processes as stories; break complex ideation down to “How might we ...?” questions; build it, don't describe it. Hack tasks into units you can deal with rationally and instinctively, but never forget the true complexities.<sup>03</sup>

## 4 DOING, NOT TALKING

Opinions are great, and everyone always has at least one. But service design is based in reality. Instead of talking about something for a long time, build stuff, test it, understand what needs to be improved, build it again. Show me, don't tell me. Stop comparing opinions, start testing prototypes.<sup>04</sup>

## 5 “YES, BUT ...” AND “YES, AND ...”

To open up your options and get some rough ideas to work on, use divergent thinking and methods (“Yes, and ...”). To close down and get real, use a convergent approach (“Yes, but ...”). Both of these are valuable. Design your own design process as a sequence of diverging and converging methods. And change your group cooperation patterns to fit what you are trying to do.<sup>05</sup>

## 6 FIND THE RIGHT PROBLEM BEFORE SOLVING IT RIGHT

When we see a problem, we want to jump right in and create a solution. But are we tackling the real problem, or just a symptom of something deeper? Get out on the street and challenge your assumptions with research, before you consider how to change things.<sup>06</sup>

## 7 PROTOTYPE IN THE REAL WORLD

Ideas always work in our heads (or in shiny presentations), and we always love our own ideas too much. Forget “good ideas” – aim for plenty of ideas and build good experiments to test and evolve those ideas through prototyping.<sup>07</sup> Get out of the studio as soon as you can, moving on to interactive prototypes that you can explore and test with real users in the original context of your service.

## 8 DON'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET

Triangulate your research with different research methods, researchers, and data types. Go for a big pile of ideas, not just one “killer” idea. And never, ever, have just one prototype. Prototypes are made to fail, and to teach you by failing.<sup>08</sup>

## 9 IT'S NOT ABOUT USING TOOLS; IT'S ABOUT CHANGING REALITY

A new journey map does not mark the end of a service design project. An ideation workshop is not co-design. A survey of your employees does not reveal their real needs. Just like building a house shouldn't end with an architect's plan, a service design project shouldn't end with ideas on paper.<sup>09</sup>

## 10 PLAN FOR ITERATION; THEN ADAPT

Service design is explorative, so you can never plan exactly what you will be doing each day. But you will need to plan your time investment and financial budget – so make plans that are flexible enough to allow you an adaptive and iterative process in the time you have.<sup>10</sup>

## 11 ZOOM IN AND ZOOM OUT

As you iterate, keep switching your focus between small details or momentary exchanges, and the holistic service experience.

## 12 IT'S ALL SERVICES

You can apply service design to anything – services, digital and physical products, internal processes, government offerings, employee or stakeholder experience ... It's not just about making “customers” happy.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>01</sup> See Chapter 2, *What is service design?*, and Chapter 12, *Embedding service design in organizations*.

<sup>02</sup> See Chapter 6, *Ideation*, Chapter 7, *Prototyping*, and Chapter 10, *Facilitating workshops*.

<sup>03</sup> See Chapter 3, *Basic service design tools*, Chapter 9, *Service design process and management*, and Chapter 10, *Facilitating workshops*.

<sup>04</sup> See Chapter 10, *Facilitating workshops*.

<sup>05</sup> See Chapter 4, *The core activities of service design*, and Chapter 10, *Facilitating workshops*.

<sup>06</sup> See Chapter 4, *The core activities of service design*, and Chapter 5, *Research*.

<sup>07</sup> See Chapter 4, *The core activities of service design*, and Chapter 7, *Prototyping*.

<sup>08</sup> See Chapter 5, *Research*, Chapter 6, *Ideation*, and Chapter 7, *Prototyping*.

<sup>09</sup> See Chapter 8, *Implementation*, Chapter 9, *Service design process and management*, and Chapter 12, *Embedding service design in organizations*.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 4, *The core activities of service design*, Chapter 9, *Service design process and management*, and Chapter 12, *Embedding service design in organizations*.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 1, *Why service design?*, Chapter 3, *Basic service design tools*, Chapter 7, *Prototyping*, and Chapter 8, *Implementation*.