

# Starting a conversation: the need for and application of Service Design in International Development

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## Abstract

International Development is concerned with the provision of public services and development programmes in contexts where resources are scarce and states are often fragile. Service design has much to offer the kinds of problems faced by International Development organisations. In this paper, we open a conversation about the need for, and application of, Service Design in International Development, focusing on two of its core principles, collaboration and user-centeredness. We also unpack some problematics that need attention when applying a Service Design approach to International Development programming.

**KEYWORDS:** Service Design, International Development, collaboration, user-centred, social innovation.

## Introduction: A conversation opener.

*“What we are beginning to see all around us – at the UN, at the World Bank, in national capitals, in research centers and universities, and in field offices – is that new opportunities for creating design space at the nexus between knowledge and action are in fact opening up. When we say ‘opening up’, we don’t mean they are naturally spreading apart like rose petals after a spring rain. We mean to imply, rather, that if you wedge a crowbar between problems and planning and exert enough force, you can just about make space for the idea of design to slip in past bureaucratic defenses to make some kind of furtive trouble.”* (Miller & Rudnick, 2011, p. 14)

International Development is concerned with the provision of public services and development programmes in contexts where resources are scarce and states are often fragile. Service Design has much to offer the kinds of problems faced by International Development organisations. This is because design can fill the space between knowledge (or ‘evidence’) and action (or ‘programmes’). As the quote above illustrates, the opportunities that a design approach might create for addressing ‘wicked’ problems in International Development are slowly becoming apparent. Despite this, the need for, and application of, Service Design in particular in International Development remains relatively unexplored.

Service Design has grown in recognition and practice over the past decade. Its origins lie in being a specialism that is fundamentally concerned with the creation, development or adaptation of services to improve the customer’s experience, and their interaction with service providers. The Service Design process has become recognisable in its own right due

to its strong principles in collaborative and user-centred design approaches to create outcomes that are useful and desirable from the user's perspective. The process and its core principles often result in a programme, an initiative, or a body of research, rather than a classic service. In this paper, we refer mainly to the use of Service Design principles, processes and thinking and their application to International Development.

In light of this, we explore what Service Design might offer the International Development sector and unpack some problematics that need attention when applying it to development programming. Our thoughts here are intended as a 'conversation opener', and are framed by our complimentary perspectives on the issue. With a background in Ethnography and participatory action research, Ruth Edmonds is a Director of Keep Your Shoes Dirty, a consultancy concerned with delivering collaborative and people-centred approaches to the generation of 'local knowledge'<sup>1</sup> to inform the design of International Development programmes. Mary Rose Cook is a Founder of Uscreates, a socially-focused design consultancy delivering social value. The authors began working together in 2010 on a project for the Girl Effect ([www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org)) to explore how new connections around the world might add value to girls' daily lives. Based in rural Uganda, our girl-led peer research approach brought together our respective experiences and skills in collaborative and Ethnographic research, co-creation and user-centred design.

In this paper, we outline how Service Design, in particular its user-centred and collaborative principles, might usefully be applied to International Development. We recognise that user-centred and collaborative approaches are not new in International Development contexts. However, we believe that when applied as part of a Service Design process, involving phases of insight gathering and iteration, there are benefits. This paper is divided into three main sections. First, we provide a picture of the International Development sector and the current lack of space for design approaches in typical development programme cycles (through which development programmes are planned and implemented). Second, we discuss how Service Design might contribute to creating social innovations in International Development contexts. Third, we explore some potential challenges Service Design faces when applied to International Development. Finally, we conclude by offering ideas for how to continue the conversation and take action.

## Setting the scene: International Development & the space for design.

The term 'International Development' is used to refer to a multi-disciplinary and multi-organisational approach to the development of so-called developing world states, which is focused on improving the quality of life for citizens. International Development is generally associated with implementing long-term sustainable solutions to problems (e.g. social, environmental, economic) through building necessary capacity, therefore, differing from shorter-term approaches offered by 'humanitarian aid'.

International Development is a diverse and challenging arena in which to work. First, organisations operate across a multitude of geographical contexts culturally, socially, politically and economically, not to mention across a vast rural to urban spectrum. Second,

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<sup>1</sup> Local knowledge', originally coined by the Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, refers to the "understanding of understandings not our own." (Geertz, 1983). Simply put, generating local knowledge means to develop an understanding *of* a place, a practice and so on rather than *about* it.

there are a huge number of themes and agendas in current development policy and practice, for example, fragile states, conflict resolution, peace and security; good governance and aid effectiveness; gender issues; environment and climate change, resources, energy and environmental sustainability; public health (especially HIV/AIDS and malaria) and; water and sanitation.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the network of development organisations is diverse, including those variously concerned with the funding, planning, and delivery of development programmes, and with different operating structures, systems, practices and politics for getting the job done, for example, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Foundations and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and other large development actors such as the World Bank, the UN, DFID and so on.

Within this vast and complex arena, Service Design is not widely recognised or valued as an approach for solving problems and challenges. This is evidenced by the fact that there is currently little or no space for using design tools in the programme cycle. This is because the International Development system is not typically characterised by a structure, framework and culture that is amenable to innovation. Rather, development programmes are generally planned (rather than designed), based on existing programme typologies in which standard programme approaches for commonly identified needs and problems are applied (rather than designing them specifically for the user or 'beneficiary').<sup>3</sup>

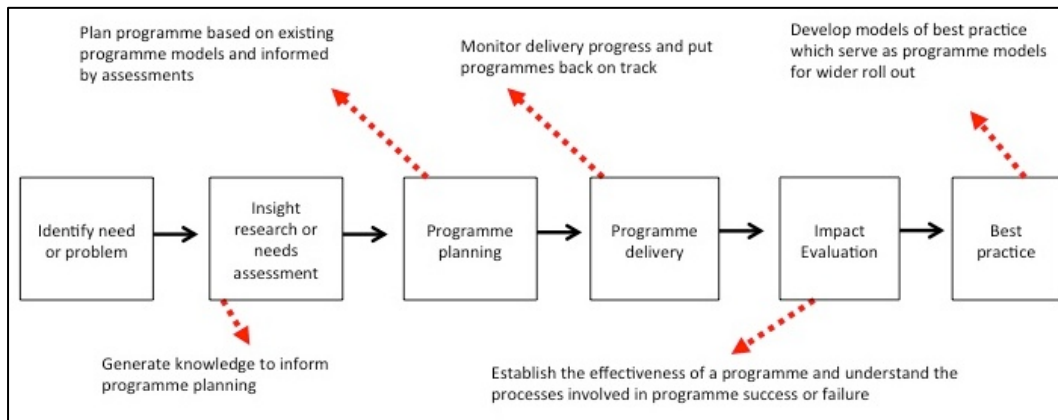
Figure 1 presents the typical programme cycle that exists in International Development from identifying a need or problem to addressing it in practice. Whilst this varies from organisation to organisation and place to place, the overall process is similar. First, a need or problem is identified, followed by attempts to understand it usually through assessments or baseline surveys that provide indicators for evaluating the impact of programmes subsequently implemented. For example, if the problem is poor nutrition amongst children, an assessment is conducted to learn about its extent and frequency, in other words for whom and where it is a problem (e.g. which kind of children and which geographics) and, occasionally, why it is a problem (e.g. economics, lack of education, poor agricultural methods). A programme is then planned, typically borrowing or building from existing programme models and informed by assessments and surveys. Programme typologies popular in International Development mean that a 'plug and play' approach to solving development problems is often the most expedient. Prevalent development problems are addressed through a formulaic approach in which tried and tested programme models are applied to common problems. Some which might be more familiar include a sponsorship approach to addressing poor school attendance (e.g. 'sponsor a child' type campaigns), a community sensitisation approach to tackling sexual health issues such as HIV/AIDS testing and awareness (e.g. community campaigns and bill board advertising), or a training and capacity building approach to help socially excluded individuals re-enter mainstream society (e.g. vocational skills training and apprenticeships for street children and ex-combatants). In a 'plug and play' approach, knowledge generated through assessments and surveys is used not as a basis for innovation, or even a design process, but to adapt existing programme models for target communities and locations (although such adaptation processes generally lack specific methods, tools and techniques). This is an 'at best' scenario. At worst, programme models may be applied with little attention to local cultural and social nuances, something that can make the difference between programme failure and success. In stage three, programmes are implemented. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) takes place at

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<sup>2</sup> This is not an exhaustive list. The UN Millennium Development Goals are a good starting point for understanding current themes and agendas (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>).

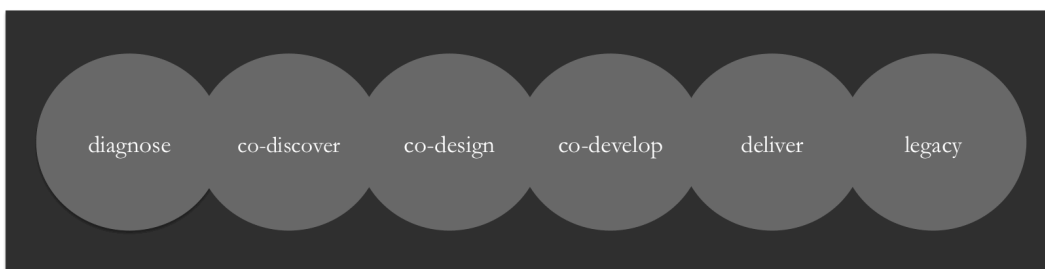
<sup>3</sup> The term 'beneficiary' is typically used to refer to programme recipients. However, it is problematic if such programmes are viewed as public *services* in which users exert agency in a design process.

strategic points, usually programme mid and end points (Laybourn, n.d.). Evaluation approaches are overwhelmingly driven by structured, quantitative methods which do not typically elicit the kind of qualitative information which is helpful for assessing impact and informing the (re)design of programmes. Finally, best practices are gleaned through programme evaluations and serve as a basis for the development of future models.



**Figure 1: Typical programme cycle in International Development (adapted from Bell and Payne, 2010)**

When considering the space for design in International Development, and the role of Service Design in particular, it is useful to look at how the Service Design process might be applied to this programme cycle. Like many problem solving processes, the Service Design process consists of identifying and understanding a problem, generating potential solutions, testing potential solutions, implementing the most successful ones and evaluating the outcomes. Within the Service Design community there are many visualised models of the process, including some that emphasise collaborative and user-centred principles. For example, a Design Council model presents the process as largely collaborative (Figure 2). In reality, few projects are truly collaborative at every stage, but many remain user-centred.



**Figure 2: Design Council's Dott Methodology (Design Council, 2011)**

The first stage is '*diagnose*', in which the problem or challenge is identified. The '*co-discover*' stage is when insight into the needs, motivations and barriers of the end-user in relation to the service is gathered. Service Design often involves the end user and other project stakeholders in gathering data themselves, from producing video diaries to becoming peer researchers. '*Co-design*' sees the combination of expertise from project stakeholders, including the end user, with that of the designer, to produce innovative ideas and solutions. Resulting ideas are developed as prototypes during the '*co-develop*' phase and iteratively tested and refined until they are proven to work, or not. Prototyping products and services quickly and cost-effectively is championed in Service Design. The final outcome is '*co-delivered*' and its '*legacy*' evaluated.

Delving deeper into any one of these stages it is possible to show how particular aspects of Service Design can be practically translated into an International Development setting. For example, a typical *'co-discover'* phase includes Service Designers using tools such as shadowing techniques (borrowed from Ethnography), cultural probes (such as video diaries, journals and cameras) and contextual interviews to capture insights. These tools provide information about the 'why' something is how it is, rather than 'what' the situation is, which is typically the focus of an ID 'needs assessment' stage. The information gathered during this phase provides rich insights upon which to build interventions.

Despite the fact that Service Design is not widely recognised as having application in International Development, there has been growing interest in applying design thinking to problems in International Development. As Miller & Rudnick (2011, p.14) observe 'the tide is turning'. Some prominent recent examples where the concept of design is making an entry into International Development practice include:

1. IDEO's Human-Centred Design toolkit provides the International Development community with innovation tools. It has been downloaded over 100,000 times (IDEO, 2011).
2. Miller and Rudnick's work on 'strategic design' at the UN, where they are piloting an evidence-based design approach to programming on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Miller & Rudnick, 2012).
3. Nesta's work to produce the Development, Impact and You (DIY) Toolkit supporting the creation of social innovations in International Development. (NESTA, 2014)

Despite the new and exciting emergence of design in International Development circles, the key principles of a Service Design approach, collaboration and user-centredness, are not new to the sector, nor are they completely absent in current International Development practice. In the 1980s and 1990s, Ferguson (1990), Escobar (1995) and Chambers (1994, 1997) called for more locally led and defined grassroots approaches to development and Ethnographic research to understand and inform development programming. Indeed, many approaches to International Development research and practice have their origins in Robert Chambers' seminal work 'Whose Reality Counts: Putting the Last First' (Chambers, 1997) which emphasised the importance of 'handing over the stick' and placing people at the centre of development processes. From Chambers' (1994, 1997) work developed various notions of action research. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (Chambers, 1983), first used by Chambers in 1983 to talk about a 'reversal of learning', Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) all have their origins in a collaborative people-centred approach where the goal is to involve programme stakeholders and beneficiaries in research and programme planning (Chambers 1994, 1997). The central notion in all of them is that people have the capacity to analyse their own reality and a continual dialogue enables a cyclical process of researching and learning towards social change (Boog *et al.*, 2001).

International Development practice is hugely varied in terms of the extent to which it can be viewed as 'designerly' (e.g. collaborative, user-centred and innovative) and is not exclusively about planning and bureaucracy. Examples of collaborative and user-centred processes and innovation are often (but not always), and most easily, found at the level of the 'grassroots'. Here, programmes can benefit from the personal touch, or flexibility in the way they are

implemented. For example, a programme supporting children heading households might ostensibly be focussed on material support (according to donor funding streams and organisation policies) whilst, in reality, households might equally benefit from the advice and ‘parenting’ that comes with the delivery of aid by ‘caseworkers’. However, innovative work and learning in programme delivery at the grassroots is less successfully translated upwards to inform broader practice and policy. Simultaneously, there is not enough emphasis at the level of policy (e.g. amongst donors and policy-makers) on innovation and the scaling of best *processes* that can be used to adapt programme designs to suit different cultural and social contexts and logics (Miller & Rudnick, 2008).

Collaborative and ‘user-centred’ action research approaches continually evolve and inform how needs and problems are identified, and solutions are planned in International Development. Service Designers can contribute to these processes and practices, and help the move from *planning* solutions to *designing* them but they will need to be specific about where they add value to what already exists in current practice. The next section explores how Service Design could be made useful for International Development users, and what value it can bring to their practices, especially in terms of the different stages of the programme cycle.

## Contributions of Service Design: creating social innovation in International Development.

As a collaborative and user-centred problem solving process, Service Design has addressed challenges and created social innovations across multiple topic areas, with a wide range of people in developed world contexts. For example, commercial projects, socially focussed projects and community development projects. In this section, we explore how it might do the same for International Development, by identifying what Service Design can offer, in terms of processes and methods, how these might be best applied, the need for them from an International Development perspective, and where and why they can benefit International Development users.

Service Design has many ‘offers’ for International Development, most of which stem from its inherent principles and that it can enhance what already exists in the sector. First, being *user-centred*, it can generate services that provide users with positive experiences, in turn creating a service that the user will continue to use and promote. This is important for International Development because the buy-in and use of a new service or programme is key to its success. Community ownership of development programmes is increasingly considered a crucial factor in their success. Early post-Independence forays into International Development were generally paternalistic: programmes were planned and delivered to the developing world by developed world ‘experts’. However, high levels of community involvement are now viewed as necessary to promote ‘sustainable development’.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, working with experts in the developing world and beneficiaries in programme planning is recognised to achieve greater impact because stakeholders ultimately care more about programmes they deliver and use. This is fertile ground for applying Service Design processes and tools that maximise a user-centred approach.

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<sup>4</sup> “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987).

Secondly, Service Design is *collaborative*. The process involves collaboration between stakeholders to understand challenges and develop solutions starting with the users' perspective. A user-centred process brings stakeholders together (i.e. the end user, the provider, supporting organisations) to collaboratively gather insight into challenges faced. With this knowledge, those leading the Service Design process facilitate innovation-focused activities to generate solutions. These activities are supported by tools such as service blueprinting, which describes, plots and understands the interactions of people and processes within the service offering, and customer journey mapping, which diagrams users' experiences with the service. The goal of such activities is to examine users' "quantitative and qualitative decisions, identify touch-points and pain-points, and identify and eliminate bottlenecks as they engage with the service" (Development Post, 2013). This process is useful to ensure that International Development organisations challenge their assumptions about what beneficiaries need and want, and provide a programme that is relevant and suitable whilst ensuring resources are used effectively and sustainably.

Whilst collaborative approaches to programme planning exist in International Development, they are not unproblematic. Notions of participatory development have become synonymous with being collaborative and people (or 'user')-centred when, in fact, these are distinct concepts and require their own tools and techniques. Moreover, although participation is a buzz-word in International Development, participatory approaches have been criticised as tokenistic, and responsible for producing unjust and illegitimate exercise of power (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Consequently, there are benefits of bringing Service Design and International Development thinking together develop useful tools for supporting collaborative and people-centred processes in development programming. However, applying Service Design approaches should not be viewed as a panacea to making International Development practice more participatory. Blyth & Kimbell (2011) have critiqued some design thinking in the International Development sector for their rhetoric of 'empathy with the individual' and an associated lack of attention to the wider social issues affecting end users. Service Designers will need to interrogate their own understanding and application of a participatory approach if they are to offer anything new and useful to the field.

Finally, the Service Design process creates *social innovations*. Social innovation is "the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs" (Mulgan 2007, p. 9). New ideas are always required to meet social needs until there is a one that clearly demonstrates success in addressing a challenge or, better still, eradicates it. Given tendencies towards programme replication in International Development, innovation is not widely valued. Moreover, because M&E is largely driven by impact assessment against programme indicators identified through baseline surveys, there is little scope to be innovative during the programme delivery stage through rapid prototyping and testing. Finally, skills associated with being innovative are not common amongst International Development organisations, perhaps because they are not deemed useful and, therefore not recruited as such, and because the sector itself is dominated by a system in which programmes are planned along formulaic lines using existing programme typologies. There is also a perception of working within tight timeframes and that engaging in innovation processes is too time-consuming and vague in terms of outcomes.

Whilst Service Design has much to contribute to International Development, the question of how best to apply it remains. By this, we mean applying it in a manner which achieves the greatest impact in terms of addressing development needs and problems through programme design, delivery and evaluation. Service Design has the potential to fill pertinent gaps in

existing tools, techniques and skill sets. However, it must be accompanied by knowledge about the challenging and unfamiliar social and cultural contexts into which it is stepping, understanding of the International Development 'system' in terms of politics and agendas at play, and respect for what already exists and works in terms of collaborative and people centred approaches. Consequently, in order to make a responsible and useful contribution, a number of problematics require attention (by designers, International Development actors, policy makers, academics and so on). These problematics, and how Service Designers can contribute to addressing them, are the subject of the next section.

## Challenges of applying a Service Design approach: Attending to the problematics.

Applying Service Design to International Development requires attention to a number of problematics. Whilst many of the challenges we outline in this section are applicable to any specialism wanting to work in International Development, we focus here on how Service Design can help tackle them to ensure its contributions are useful and responsible. Where possible, we offer initial ideas for how Service Design might directly address challenges, and identify where further work is needed amongst the Service Design community.

First, whilst Service Design has been building recognition over the past decade within commercial and public sectors in Europe (UK, Scandinavia, Holland and Italy), the USA and Australia, it is yet to be applied in a developing world context in any significant way. Moreover, although there is a need to progress how collaborative and people (or user)-centred approaches are used in International Development, there is still relatively little demand for them from policy-makers, donors and practitioners. In order to create better awareness about the value of Service Design, opportunities must be created for conversations between designers and International Development stakeholders. Such conversations could usefully generate understanding amongst Service Designers of the International Development sector, explore how Service Design tools can be of use, and identify what changes need to happen at a systemic level within the sector to create the kind of space needed for design and innovation to 'slip in', (Miller & Rudnick, 2011, p. 14).

Second, the ethics of applying Service Design in developing world contexts need to be carefully considered. Even when applied in the developed world, ethical application is rarely a consideration. Being ethical in settings where cultural and social codes are unfamiliar, and gender, racial and religious politics are complex, is challenging, especially where the practices of a collaborative approach may even put designers and participants at risk. For example, working in a post-conflict environment can throw up tensions and sensitivities that need to be deeply understood before an appropriate and safe way of engaging stakeholders in a collaborative process can be developed. In addition, there are politics of participation to consider. Involving stakeholders in collaborative design activities is challenging when they represent different parts of the International Development system and come with competing agendas, and vastly different skills and abilities. For example, bringing illiterate beneficiaries together with NGO staff running a programme, or donor staff together with staff from a donor recipient organisation can produce unequal power relations that inhibit participation.

The notion of ethics in International Development practice is a huge area which requires greater attention than can be given here. However, understanding what is locally considered 'ethical' is an important first step to developing a co-operative approach to ethics in which



locally situated notions of what is ethical can be used to inform guidelines (Miller & Scollon, 2011; Payne, 2009). Service Designers can extend their user-centred approaches (used to design and implement services) to the domain of ethics to promote understanding about ethical considerations from a local perspective. This includes both imagining scenarios, something that Service Designers are experts in, to explore ‘what’s ethical’, and directly exploring local cultural and social concepts which have a bearing on what is considered ethical from a local perspective. It is important that such activities are included at the beginning of the Service Design process and returned to throughout: after all, an understanding of what is locally ethical can change during the course of a design journey.

Third, the accessibility of approaches and tools in developing world settings is a key challenge. For example, how to make tools and techniques (a) user-friendly in terms of speaking the language of International Development actors and able to work within the operating structures and systems of International Development organisations; (b) understandable from a local perspective and sensitive to gender, racial, cultural and religious politics; and (c) accessible to organisations which may be challenged, for example, in terms of access to electricity, computers and the internet, or have staff with low levels of education and literacy. Designers have a special ability to visually communicate messages, approaches, concepts and strategies. This is a key component in making new tools and approaches user-friendly for the audience. Designers’ visual communication skills can provide a common language (Vanderbeeken, 2011) that translates the strategic language of organisations (International Development organisations in this case) with the emotional language and experiences of the public:

*Often, more complex problems can be attacked only by teams of specialists, speaking their own professional jargon. Industrial designers, who are members of such a team, find that, besides fulfilling their normal design function, they must act as a communication bridge between other team members. Many times the designer may be the only one able to speak the various technical jargons; because of his educational background, the role of team interpreter is forced upon him. So we find the industrial designer becoming the team synthesist, a position to which he has been elevated by the default of people from the other disciplines (Papanek, 1971, p. 28).*

Fourth, despite the fact that many International Development programmes focus at the local level, programming in International Development is rarely informed by ‘local knowledge’. (Geertz, 1983). Creating space, and using approaches to generate ‘local knowledge’, means that social innovations can be locally situated, in turn making programmes more locally effective. Although Service Design typically views the practice of Ethnography as a set of methods and tools which can be used to generate insights (e.g. case studies, participant observation and so on), it is actually an approach to research, underpinned by some key principles (e.g. observing, participating, listening, reflexivity) which inform how certain choice methods and tools are employed, allowing systems of meanings within (sub)cultures to be revealed and understood.

Consequently, Service Design needs to be properly informed and framed by ‘local knowledge’ to ensure it can offer social innovations which are locally situated and thus socially and culturally appropriate. Service Design has evolved as a specialism in developed world contexts and, as such, been largely applied in broadly familiar cultural and social settings. Assumptions that Service Designers hold about people’s behaviours and practices naturally inform the way their processes (e.g. tools and techniques) are used in projects, the nature of the insights gathered, how they are interpreted, and the way they are used to inform designs. For example, assumptions about how different genders will participate in a

group activity gleaned from developed world project experiences may not hold true in developing world settings. Instead, Service Designers need to suspend these assumptions and replace them with deep understanding about the local cultural logics at play, enabling their processes to have greater impact and, ultimately, success.

Fifthly, the network of development actors variously involved in the funding, planning and delivery of International Development programmes makes for a complex chain of ‘end users’ and other stakeholders. Moreover, the focus of programme planning is not necessarily driven by the needs and demands of the end users (usually known as ‘programme beneficiaries’). Rather, donor budgets, targets and timelines and the broader political structures and systems of the agency delivering the programme are paramount in programme planning activities. However, Service Designers are very aware of working within tight budgets, big targets and short timelines. In fact, these elements are seen as part of the innovation challenge. The collaborative nature of the Service Design process can lead to co-delivered interventions which tap into existing resources available which can release pressure on budgets whilst reaching targets. When starting with the end user and their perspective, designed solutions can not only benefit them, but also the network of International Development actors.

Finally, the question of who is best to apply a Service Design approach to International Development is important. Some platforms now exist which have packaged Service Design tools and techniques with the aim of supporting ‘non-designers’ to use them, such as books, for example *This is Service Design Thinking* (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012), websites, such as the Design Council’s service design resources (Design Council, 2013) and toolkits such as the Service Design Toolkit for public services (Namahn, 2014). The theory is that such platforms and toolkits can equip those working in International Development to use the approach, presuming large barriers such as ethical practice, accessibility and local contextual understanding (discussed above) have been resolved. However, the success of using Service Design is partly due to the qualities that designers inherently bring such as the way they connect with commissioners, front-line staff and the public. They communicate visually, encourage risk taking and always prototype ideas. This engages and empowers those they are working with, helps develop creativity, and produce innovative solutions. Non-designers who also have these qualities may apply a Service Design approach successfully. For those who do not, it is unlikely that simply providing Service Design tools will create innovation. Instead, building the practice of Service Design within International Development through a partnership approach between International Development stakeholders and Service Designers would be helpful. Those working in International Development would benefit from shadowing Service Designers delivering projects: observing, learning and building capabilities in the principles, tools and processes. For the Service Designer, an experienced expert eye and opinion on the complexities of working in International Development would help ensure Service Design thinking is applied in the most strategic way, maximising impact and value.

## **Conclusion: Continuing the conversation and taking action.**

In this paper we have opened a conversation about the role of Service Design in the International Development sector, in particular the need for it and how it might be best applied. Perhaps most pertinently, we have explored some of the potential challenges that need addressing when considering how Service Design can make both a useful and

responsible contribution. We have outlined what Service Designers, and their particular skills sets and abilities, can offer in terms of addressing these challenges, and where more work is needed amongst the Service Design community. Some specific areas we would like to take forward include:

- » Bringing an Ethnographic approach and a Service Design approach together to explore how 'local knowledge' can be generated and used in the design of International Development programmes and policy.
- » Exploring the network of development actors to better understand how a Service Design approach might 'slip in' and be best applied to different actors in this network and at key junctures in the International Development programme cycle which can most benefit from more collaboration, user-centredness and innovation (e.g. the programme planning stage, process and impact evaluation).
- » Re-examining and re-thinking the role of 'beneficiaries' in programme design to find new ways of actively engaging them as collaborators in programme design processes.
- » Understanding how Service Design techniques and tools might be usefully applied to different aspects of the programme cycle.

We believe the conversation started in this paper should be continued, and action taken. Conversation may be continued through further papers focussing on specific aspects raised here, or based on open discussions from interested parties, and we invite such people to contact us. Action can be taken through practice, particularly that which is based on collaborations between Service Designers and International Development actors, be they organisation staff, practitioners, think tanks or academics. It is essential that thinking developed in print is observed, applied and developed through practical work, which is well informed and monitored. Such work will provide the most insightful thinking about the full potential of the role Service Design can play in International Development. There are exciting and challenging times ahead as Service Design thinking is applied more comprehensively to the International Development sector and we look forward to seeing, and being part of, this journey.

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