



Patterns of disruption: Diagnosing response mechanisms in actor networks

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Abstract

Service, and failures associated with it, occur in networked contexts. It is important to understand patterns of disruptions in service, and how actors influence possible failures through their participation as this can impact value creation. This paper reports the results of an interview study analysed using critical incident theory supported by design-driven generative tools. We identify eight patterns of disruption: request, query, hiccup, delay, mistake, flaw, breakdown and the unexpected. The paper also contributes a disruption ripple model, and identifies five tensions in responding to disruptions: competing priorities, dealing with difficult others, mismatching expectations, shouldering responsibility and reluctant assistance. The patterns of disruption provide a more nuanced way of understanding incidents in service situations. The ripple model and identified tensions illustrate the underlying complexities in network relationships. We argue that service-providing organisations need to address the development of relationships to support beneficial value outcomes.

Keywords: service design, disruption ripple model, service failure, critical incident technique, healthcare