Service Design & Social Innovation Forum

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Abstract

Social innovation is a dynamic phenomenon, with solutions emerging and moving from the margins of society to the mainstream. The word "social" in "social innovation" refers both to the means and the end. As a means, it indicates that these innovations are based on the capabilities of the people who activate and benefit from the innovation, and on unexpected interactions and partnerships between citizens, institutions, businesses, and governments. As an end, it indicates that the social effort is targeted to solve commonly recognized problems that existing businesses and technological solutions have failed to address. This implies that design discipline (and service design) can have an important role in identifying these small, local social inventions and their working prototypes, and make them spread to address economic, social and environmental challenges.

Research activities on service design for social innovation - particularly undertaken in DESIS Network - have identified a particular kind of service configurations known as collaborative services: services where the final users are actively involved and assume the role of service co-designers and co-producers. Recognition of the collaborative service model led to the coining of another one: relational services, in which participants need not only to be operationally active and collaborative, but also well inclined and willing to relate with others in an intensive personal manner.

Questions

» What service design discipline is learning from the activities on design for social innovation and vice-versa?

» Could social innovations be an important source for innovation in the service sector, bringing into light new service configurations and, consequently, enlarging the definition of "services" itself?