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# Holding it open: Building capacity for self-determined collaborative Service Design

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## Abstract

Despite welcome explorations of difference in Service Design approaches in recent scholarship, the prevailing notion that the field is measured by tools, methods, and outcomes limits how SD might contribute to open-ended practices of self-determined design and capacity-making in socially and politically-grounded contexts. We draw on a two-year service design collaboration among three learning-communities with differently situated students to suggest means for "holding open" collaborative work in process as a way to both create space for collectivity and to grapple with difference, tension, and emergent conditions. This framework is a proposition for self-determined service design, rooted in the complex contexts of collaborators' experiences and self-articulated desires. We argue for extending SD practitioners' and researchers' understandings of uncertainty (Alexander, 2006) and the unknown (Akama, Pink & Sumartojo, 2018) to consider these as approaches for engaging in plurality and emergence, rather than seeing them as conditions requiring mitigation to reach a specific end-goal.