Design for Social Innovation as Designing for Service: The Case of Active Aging in Brazil

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Abstract

This study explores the territory of designing for service and design for social innovation. More specifically, it discusses service as a platform of action that enables social change. The theme of aging exemplifies a social issue that is increasingly emerging in Brazil. This study is based on a literature review of key definitions in design for social innovation related to designing for service and on the concept of active aging, which is considered as a key qualitative guideline in designing for service for older people. The analysis relies on a case study divided in two parts: a design exploration developed under the proposed approach with undergraduate students in 2011 and a description of an actual service, started in 2015, that validates it. Results exemplify how social change is promoted through designing for service. This study was developed in the framework of the DESIS Network (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) approach and demonstrates how didactic activities developed in DESIS Labs can generate pioneering service concepts, projects, and visions to nurture processes of social change.

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1 Introduction

Service design has grown as a multidisciplinary, human-centered, holistic, and iterative approach, focused on creating new interfaces for value co-creation, in order to meet people's needs, as well as expected stakeholders' goals (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011; Wetter-Edman et al., 2014).

Design plays a critical role in this context by providing processes and tools to envision new scenarios to connect people, organizations, communities, and their resources in new partnerships to enable service (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). Service, as a perspective of value co-creation, is understood as a new standpoint for social and economic exchanges within society and is enabled in the context of resource integration between actors (Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

Within this context, this study adopts the definition of designing for service, which, for Kimbell (2011) "is seen as an exploratory process that aims to create new kinds of value relation between diverse actors within a socio-material configuration" (p. 42). The author, echoing Manzini (2011), suggests that "what is being designed is not an end result but rather a platform for action with which diverse actors will engage over time" (Kimbell, 2011, p. 45). As this study exemplifies, this definition is particularly useful in clarifying the relations between service and design for social innovation.

The research and practice in design for social innovation are related to the development of service design in different ways, which encompass the dematerialization of products in view of sustainability (Manzini & Vezzoli, 2002), the recognition of service models that are born inside creative communities (Meroni, 2007), the possibility of designing for services that create not only economic benefits but also social change within local contexts (Joly, Straioto, & Figueiredo, 2014), and the investigation of service models based on new patterns of interpersonal relations (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009).

This article explores the interface between the perspectives of design for social innovation and designing for service, where service models are designed with the aim to enable new interactions among actors to promote social change.

To demonstrate this approach, a literature review about design for social innovation in its intersection with service design is presented, and two service concepts are analyzed, which are focused on the issue of aging in Brazil, a country in which demographic transition is manifested through a fall in mortality rates, followed by falling birth rates, resulting in significant changes in the age structure of the population (Alves, 2008). The concept of active aging (World Health Organization, 2002) provides the qualitative framework to analyze the direction of social change fostered by the service concepts under analysis.

The results exemplify how social change is promoted through designing for service. This study was developed in the framework of the DESIS Network (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) approach and demonstrates how didactic activities developed in DESIS Labs can generate pioneering service concepts and visions to nurture processes of social change.

2 Designing for Service and for Social Innovation

Social innovations can be defined as "new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act" (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010, p. 3).

Social innovation plays an important role as a source of social change. Cajaíba-Santana (2014) states that "social innovation is always related to collective social action aiming at social change" and that its innovative character is that it "brings up social change that cannot be built up on the basis of established practices." It is important also to consider the transformative character of social innovation: "what underlies the path of social innovation is not a social problem to be solved, but the social change it brings about" (p. 43).

Design practices, when applied to social innovation, should consider "ontological immateriality of the phenomenon" (ibid, p. 44), which led to focus on service, by articulating what design is doing and can do to enable new value co-creation.

Design for social innovation can be defined as a constellation of design activities aimed at supporting or enabling processes of social change based on the recombination of existing resources (e.g., social capital, technology), in order to achieve socially recognized goals (Manzini, 2014). It can be developed in at least two ways: designers identify existing cases of social innovation and give them support and designers create new ways of thinking and doing and start a new movement of social innovation (ibid, 2014).

Following this perspective, socially innovative services can be enabled, supported, empowered, and/or replicated. In this sense, this approach is distinctive because it identifies social innovation cases as new service models already being prototyped by groups and communities (Jégou & Manzini, 2008), envisions new relations among actors toward creating shared social value (Morelli, 2007), uses people's social capital as a resource to enable new ways to cocreate value (Joly, Cipolla, & Manzini, 2014), and, ultimately, creates conditions for processes of social change to happen (Baek, Meroni, & Manzini, 2015).

Research activities in design for social innovation coined the terms "collaborative" and "relational services." The first notion came to light when types of service interactions in social innovation cases were identified, called as collaborative services (Jégou & Manzini, 2008). The term "collaborative" emerged because participants were identified as active co-producers of commonly recognized benefits, instead of participating in service relations where frontline employees and customers have predefined roles. A special form of service interaction known as relational services (Cipolla, 2012; Cipolla & Manzini, 2009) was identified, where participants interact between each other in an intensely interpersonal way.

On the practitioners' side, the work of the Design Council (England), La 27e Région (France) and MindLab (Denmark) are examples of organizations that apply design thinking to contribute to solving complex social and economic problems in the form of new public service (Bason, 2010; Burns, Cottam, Vanstone, & Winhall, 2006; La 27e Région, 2010). These organizations are notable for providing greater

opportunity for citizens to contribute to the reinvention of democracy, by cocreating solutions in response to local social challenges.

In summary, all these groups have been developing projects that demonstrate principles of a design for social innovation perspective: co-design processes (Scrivener, 2005) to identify or envision new relations among actors, including people's social capital as a resource; and to create conditions for processes of social change to happen. Service, therefore, can be a means for social innovation, when it facilitates new connections among social actors, who can be engaged in the service process as active agents to create shared social value.

3 Active Aging and Its Relevance for the Brazilian Context

By 2050, the number of older people in the world will surpass the number of children under 15 years of age and will reach a total of 2 billion people (United Nations, 2013). According to the World Health Organization—WHO (2002)—the aging population can be seen as a success of socioeconomic development and public health policies, but it is also a challenge for contemporary society. It defines the need to promote active aging as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security, in order to improve the quality of life as people get older." The word "active" refers to "continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labor force." It means that for older people to be active is a choice "to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capacities" (WHO, 2002, p. 12).

WHO reinforced the focus on health in 2015 by adopting the concept of "healthy aging." The report defines healthy aging as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age" (WHO, 2015, p. 28) and suggests a twin-track approach to policy that seriously considers the need for both healthy and active aging.

While for the WHO (2002, 2015), the meaning of active aging prioritizes health, the European Union has defined active aging as the process of "creating opportunities for staying in the labor market longer, for contributing to society through unpaid work in the community as volunteers or passing on their skills to younger people, and in their extended families, and for living autonomously and in dignity for as much and as long as possible" (Council of the European Union, 2010, p. 5) or to develop strategies to "meet the challenge of promoting a healthy and active aging population to allow for social cohesion and higher productivity" (ibid, p. 16).

Brazil is facing an increased life expectancy and lower birth rates. This is bringing many challenges that are beyond the scope of this study but which provide its contextual background. One example is the increase in the number of people receiving pensions, in the face of an aging population, and in the consequent reduction of the workforce. It is "essential to restructure the pension system to ensure its sustainability" (Costa, Mesquita, Porto Júnior, & Massuda, 2011, p. 128). Brazil "is not prepared for the needs generated by such population aging,

due to challenges such as the adequacy of the social security and health system" (Miranda, Mendes, & Silva, 2016, p. 507).

Therefore, active aging (Kalache, 2013) must be promoted in Brazil by searching for "alternatives to keep their elderly citizens socially and economically integrated and independent". There are four fundamental pillars related to the concept of active aging (Kalache, 2013): "health, lifelong learning, participation and security" (pp. 34–37). This study is particularly related to two of them, namely, (1) participation, offering older people the possibility to pursue opportunities to remain active in society with the goal of providing a satisfactory transition to a new stage of life, and (2) lifelong learning, works as a support to the participation principle and aims to keep older people actively participating in, and connected to, society, thus maintaining their physical and mental ability. Nevertheless, the other pillars are also equally important: (3) health, consists of creating health support environments and encouraging healthier individual choices to promote well-being during the whole lifetime of a person, and (4) security, seeks to maintain dignity and care provision, steady housing, good-quality health, protection against harm, and financial security (especially for people who are vulnerable due to sickness or disability).

To explore this issue in terms of social innovation and social change, this study uses the definition of active aging from WHO (2002) as a qualitative guideline. Therefore, keeping older (pensionable) people longer in the labor market in accordance with their wishes and capabilities is proposed as a choice, in order to preserve people's well-being, which is also in line with healthy aging as defined by the World Health Organization (2015).

The Brazilian population is increasingly demanding new service models for older people (Miranda et al., 2016), and the concept of active aging can support the designing for service to foster the well-being of this age group.

4 Methodological Framework

This study is based on a design exploration carried out in 2011 by third-year undergraduate students in Production Engineering at the Polytechnic School in the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. This university hosts a DESIS Lab, and, therefore, this didactic activity was developed within the framework of the DESIS Network approach. The Network is focused on how designers and design schools can collaborate in processes of social innovation.

The assignment given to students was presented as an "ill-formulated problem" (Buchanan, 1992): to explore the design of socially innovative service concepts for older people in Rio de Janeiro, a city in which one in seven people is over 60 years old (Pnad, 2009). The concept of active aging was presented as a conceptual framework to guide the design process in a way to frame the results in terms of the social change to be achieved.

The design exploration methodology was inspired by the human-centered design (HCD) Toolkit approach (IDEO, 2011). The HCD Toolkit helped the students to concentrate on a human-centered design process, since the toolkit supported them in

building skills in observation and empathy. Within this approach, students were invited to establish a direct contact with older people, to define the design challenge through interviews and participant observations, and to develop and refine the service idea by using different service design tools: service journey, personas, and service blueprint (Miettnen & Koivisto, 2009).

Four years later (2015), the authors identified a service model that follows one of the projects designed by the students in 2011, which provided the key insight for the development of this study. The description of this service model was elaborated, based on information obtained through semi-structured interview with the service business's founder and on the analysis of the service concept's features. The analysis focus on "service concept" is placed on the "detailed description of what is to be done for the customer (what needs and wishes are to be satisfied) and how this is to be achieved" (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996, p. 149). Analysis excludes other information, such as its business model (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

5 Results

Students enrolled in the 2011 course produced seven different service concepts. The following paragraphs give an account of one of the service concepts and the actual service identified as a validation for it, respectively, Golden Age and Maturijobs.

5.1 Golden Age

Golden Age was developed by the group of students whose assignment was to develop a socially innovative service related to work issues. Qualitative research focused on semi-structured interviews with people ranging from 60 to 85 years or older, to define the design challenge. This process revealed three major insights: older people have problems dealing with new technologies; older people want to show what they "are capable of" and do not want to reveal their limitations or difficulties; and personal life experiences were considered as an advantage when hiring an older worker.

Hence, the analysis of these results, combined with the concept of active aging, led the group to target its focus on a service that would open up the possibility for unemployed or retired older people to return to the labor market.

Golden Age was developed as a service that is composed of two main activities:

(a) A head-hunter service specializing in (re)discovering older people's talents, which allows a company to find an experienced professional to suit its needs.
(b) A coaching service to help those with difficulties in applying for new jobs; it involves the improvement of personal skills through enrollment in courses (such as the use of ICT and related resources) and includes support in overcoming psychological barriers or other challenges.

The service includes a data bank in which older workers' résumés are updated, which supports both activities: the coaching activity, in which candidates are profiled and the need for new knowledge and skills is identified and thus may be provided, and the head-hunter activity, by enabling easy access to the candidates' profiles. This is complemented by a continuous networking activity, in which companies that are eager to hire older professionals or get consulting services from them are identified. This is further supplemented by a dissemination activity, through which the potential for finding older workers is presented.

The customer experience, from an older person's perspective, is designed to change from that of a devalued person (afraid to come back to the market and lacking the support to do so) to a confident one, who goes to a job interview and (possibly) gets a new position. An increase in confidence, and in respect for older people, is expected as a result of changing how society and the market value them, which would be followed by a positive psychological effect. Therefore, it promotes a cultural change beyond the expected economic gain.

Golden Age is targeted at empowering older people by focusing on their capabilities and promoting active aging by providing an option, i.e., to reinstate into the labor market those wish to be.

5.2 Maturijobs

Maturijobs was started by the Brazilian entrepreneur, Mórris Litvak, who became personally aware of both the richness and the restrictions that accompany aging. This knowledge began with his own grandmother who, at the age of 80, was healthy and still working, when an accident forced her to give up her active lifestyle. This forced inactivity had a devastating effect on her mental and physical health. Mórris Litvak also learned to appreciate the stories, knowledge, and experiences of older people by working as a volunteer in a long-term care institution.

On this basis, he founded Maturijobs as a social business in São Paulo in 2015. The service aims to connect older people with job opportunities and bases its service provision on an online platform (website).

The platform allows users to sign in as an individual (of 50 years or over) or as a company.

There are two ways to add information onto the platform: (a) individual users post their personal information, which is not restricted to professional and educational experiences but also contains personal information, such as abilities, hobbies, and "personal dreams," and (b) companies post job opportunities.

It also allows two search methods: (a) companies search for individuals using filters (abilities, cities, and job sectors), and the personal description of each candidate is highlighted in the results and (b) individuals search for opportunities using filters that include the type of career (e.g., freelance, consultant, or volunteer worker) and the job sector they are looking for. The matchmaking process includes a notification e-mail sent to both interested parties.

Maturijobs' current partners include enterprises that deal with the themes of innovation, entrepreneurship, and aging. It is clear that Maturijobs is cultivating a network of companies that require services from this niche market, while also promoting the value in hiring an older worker.

According to Maturijobs' manifesto (2016), the service aims to create a new community of people over 50 years of age, by connecting different generations and celebrating the benefits of such an exchange.

6 Analysis and Discussion

In terms of social innovation, the two service concepts indicate how designing for service can promote social change. As employees, older people (1) may be ensured access to private health system, primarily because of benefits offered by the organization; (2) will participate in and stay connected to their community, as well as will maintain and update their abilities and knowledge; (3) will contribute to an increase in productivity; and (4) will receive an income that meets their needs. This reduces health costs and other problems that result from an inactive lifestyle within this age group. These are all related to the four pillars of active aging and to the aim of the European approach.

Golden Age and Maturijobs aim to change the prevailing mindset regarding aging and to acknowledge the experience and knowledge of older people, thus generating opportunities for increased social participation. For individuals, it means the opportunity to experience an active later life and to maintain or reinforce social relationships, prevention of social isolation and related diseases that may arise with retirement, and opportunity for multigenerational two-way mentoring that may appeal to employers. Companies can benefit from a multigenerational collaboration; it also represents the preservation of knowledge, culture, identity, and institutional memory and plays a crucial role in making the workplace appealing to all workers.

Golden Age and Maturijobs therefore exemplify how demands for innovative service models can be met and, under a service perspective, promote social innovation. In this sense, they facilitate new connections among actors, based on their qualities as social resources, thus creating solutions to the social challenges of an aging society. However, not all people aged 60+ are able to work—due to physical and cognitive restrictions—and even for those who are, this may require adaptation in workplaces and job configurations. This calls for other specific design solutions that can be also advanced by areas as product design and interaction design.

This study was developed in a DESIS Lab. The theoretical framework of the DESIS Network considers society as a large laboratory of creativity and change, which requires centers (labs or other entities) that support and stimulate this creativity to flourish and develop (Cipolla, Joly, & Afonso, 2015; Manzini, 2015). DESIS Labs aim to participate in and empower these processes. It includes the development of exemplary or pioneering projects, which aim to demonstrate to different actors

that "it is possible to operate the shift towards new ways of living and doing (and to create the desire to do so)" (Cipolla et al., 2015, p. 6).

This study typifies this envisioning role of design for social innovation when related to designing for service. Students and the DESIS Lab team identified a trend in the Brazilian context and developed Golden Age in 2011 as a service concept for an emerging social problem. In 2015, Maturijobs actualized the service concept envisioned by the students.

This study argues that the extension of the working life of older people is a way to ensure active aging, if aligned with their wishes and capabilities, by increasing and sustaining their participation in society. However, despite of the positive aspects of active aging, reinsertion of older people into the labor market (even those who are of pensionable age and potentially unfit) may also be related to a pressing need for financial and health security and not be a choice. In Brazil, this is an important issue because the country is not prepared to meet the needs of an increasingly aging population. This is an ongoing discussion for the authors, related to the questions and findings of this study, particularly in the Brazilian context, when the current pension system is being discussed. Proposed reforms include extending the retirement age, which means that services such as Golden Age and Maturijobs will be required to keep workers even longer in the labor market and not by choice.

This is also an important design issue in political terms and requires from designers a careful consideration and analysis of the overall context and impact of their practices and the direction of the social change enabled by their service projects. The clarification of the political consequences of design for social innovation (also when designing for service) is a growing demand among those involved with these practices.

7 Conclusion

The article has presented and explored how designing for service can embrace the perspective of active aging to design socially innovative service models.

Social change was considered in this study from two perspectives. The broader social change is the significant changes occurring in the age structure of the Brazilian population, which has resulted in an increasingly older population. This was presented as the overall background for the social change fostered by the service concepts, analyzed, and oriented to foster new behaviors and relations toward an age-friendly culture. This process takes place through the new interactions between older people and companies, enabled by Golden Age and Maturijobs. But these interactions are not restricted to these two actors.

Maturijobs, for example, runs a free social networking website in which different actors, members or nonmembers, can interact. Both Maturijobs and Golden Age have established a continuous networking activity with companies as a key feature, by conveying the benefits of employing an older worker or to "support the cause," as presented in the Maturijobs (2016) manifesto. This service includes the slogan: "we are the new 50+ community showing our face," which embraces older workers and

companies as clients or partners but also any other interested actors. Older people in Maturijobs can also offer voluntary work, which opens the possibility of getting organizations other than companies involved.

Both service concepts were set up as platforms for action that engage diverse actors over time. This allows a new kind of value relations between them to be created. It is therefore possible to identify, in both service concepts, a designing for service perspective.

The analysis of the two service concepts indicates that designing for service can be a beneficial approach in design for social innovation processes. Designing for service is, therefore, a possible way to support collective actions toward social change.

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