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Entanglements and Flows.
Service Encounters and Meanings
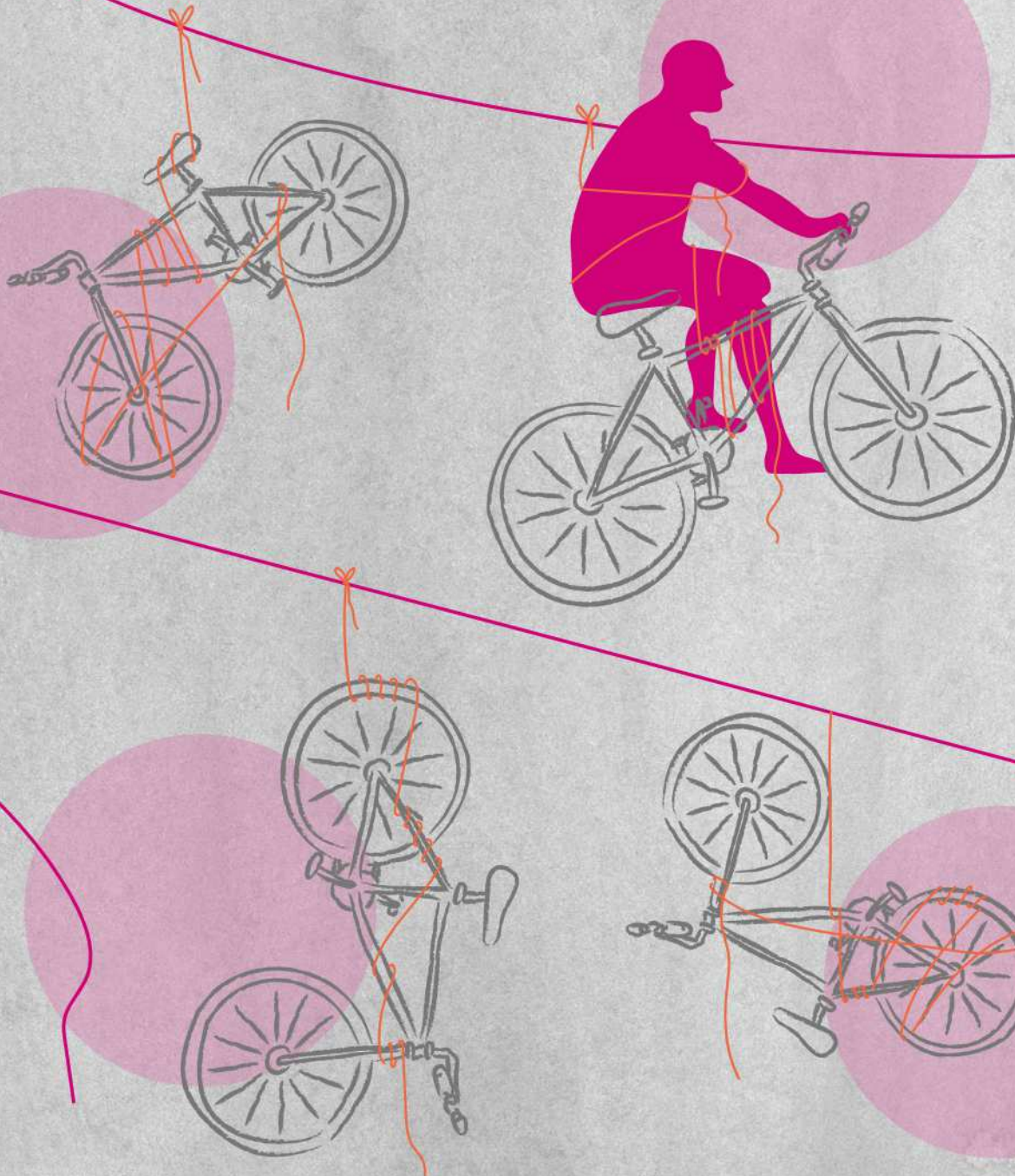
Artwork by Natalia Dai Prá Penteado
Based on the artwork of Terra Fenster and Luiz Machado

ServDes 2023: Entanglements and Flows Service Encounters and Meanings

Dear readers,

This issue is the result of a productive partnership between the Strategic Design Research Journal and the ServDes — Service Design and Innovation conference, the premier research conference for exchanging knowledge within Service Design and Service Innovation studies.

In 2023, ServDes reached the Americas for the first time. The event was hosted in Rio de Janeiro from July 11th to 14th by the Department of Arts & Design of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (dAD, PUC-Rio) and the Production Engineering Program of the Alberto Luiz Coimbra Institute for Graduate Studies and Research in Engineering at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE, UFRJ).

For over thirty years, service design has been intertwined with Strategic Design. From its inception, Strategic Design has been involved in the strategic processes that organizations develop to operate within their ecosystems, and designing product-service systems is among its primary outcomes. Therefore, the SDRJ has consistently published articles on Service Design, tracking the evolution of this approach and paying particular attention to its recent developments. In this profound crisis that humanity is experiencing, Design is elaborating a process of consistent critique and self-critique and Service Design has provided significant insights.

The Rio edition of conference, named ServDes.2023, collected and organized some of these insights. Its title 'Entanglements and Flows: Service Encounters and Meanings,' reveals its exploratory character. The conference flowed from the Global North to the Global South, searching for entanglements with other epistemologies and ontologies.

Alternative worldviews and valorization of local knowledge and practices increasingly question how service innovators and researchers consider the intersections among nature, culture, and society. Aspects such as otherness, justice, spirituality, vulnerability, or improvisation, among others, are redefining service encounters and ecosystems. Discussions of human-nonhuman relations are challenging user-centered design approaches. These processes explicitly or implicitly question service research and practices regarding the focus of its activities: services.

What (how, who or when) is a service? It has been a learning process that includes academic and non-academic knowledge and highlights contrasts between alternative and mainstream practices, which may increasingly lead to new theoretical developments and political consequences.

Rio de Janeiro successfully hosted the discussion of this thematic field, since the city is economically driven by the service sector, composed of formally designed service provisions and a meshwork of informal, imprecise, improvised, unacknowledged services. Different social groups and workers collide or dialogue in various public or private spaces. In this environment, seven thematic tracks were discussed:

Social innovation, localities and transformative processes. Social innovation processes may reveal the emergence of new service ideas, or services may be designed to support local transformative processes. These changing processes may be referred to and impact

neighborhoods or cities. This situated dimension may include new service encounters and new local ecosystems, which may be supported or hindered by digital technologies and platforms.

Services, business and social economy. Services may express the emergence of local autonomy and the resilience of communities and ecosystems. They may integrate the framework of a creative social economy, including services related to informality and understood under the "effectuation" theory of entrepreneurship. Services may operate based on complementary currencies and be part of a circular or a distributed economy model.

Reimagining work: service or servitude. Services express the potential of designers and innovators as political agents. That is, as actors capable to influence the power balance in service provisions and service encounters. Enabling ecosystems, and in particular digital platforms, maybe express new forms of servitude. There would be a call for worker-centred design activities, or for reimagining work relations and processes in services.

Services and relationships: humans, beyond and below. Many services are focused on human relationships. Usually, strangers meet for the first time and collaborate to co-produce a service, but many evolve or rely on continuous and intensive collaborations and relationships. There may be ways for designers and innovators to navigate or get entangled in these human encounters. Services however may be increasingly reframed by more-than-human, posthuman and less-than-human (dehumanizing) perspectives.

Services, technologies, and futures. Technological development continuously opens possibilities for service design, and in this process, agency, capabilities, and power are distributed across humans, machines and the natural systems in different ways. Technodiversity also emerges as a vision where technological development could be related to systems of knowledge manifested in different localities: ways of life, and ways of sensing and ordering experiences. This may bring new challenges in designing social-technical systems as services.

Services between and beyond worlds. The possibilities of decolonial approaches to services expressed also with the term "autonomous design", include challenging commercial and modernizing aims to propose placed-based approaches and to embrace multiple worlds. This pluriversal perspective may challenge usual service definitions and ideas. Not to forget the influence of feminist perspectives that are opening up new approaches to services. New design communities and networks may collaborate in the constitution of a "designerly" way of conceiving services.

Services for Emergency: disasters, war, refugees, pandemic. Designers and innovators around the world, in alliance with other disciplines, had to navigate a global pandemic. New and old challenges are continually renewed, which requires quick local responses and strategic problem-solving capabilities. Challenges are related to war, refugees, and natural disasters, among others. Designers and innovators have developed and explored new possibilities for their practices on services under such pressing demands and constraints.

Far from providing ready-made answers or models, ServDes.2023 intended to create a moment to reflect on and celebrate the transformative meaning of serving. The content presented in the conference reflects how the service design community responded to this invitation.

This special issue presents a selection of fourteen contributions submitted, which presents theoretical elaborations and design cases that can kaleidoscopically express the content of the ServDes.2023. The issue aims to communicate the event experience through a set of diverse contributions selected by the ServDes.2023 Review Committee.

In *Empathy building through Virtual Reality filmmaking in social innovation: decreasing tensions between socially opposed citizens,* Froukje Sleeswijk Visser and Jeroen van Erp discuss a design experience that addresses youth-resident tensions in a neighborhood by building empathy. The experience uses Virtual Reality to facilitate stepping into each other's perspectives, foster collaboration and mitigate tensions. In this way, the authors reflect on transformative impacts and the role of designers in social innovation.

In *Nolo's Situated Vocabulary: embracing diverse 'worldings' through Participatory Design,* Virginia Tassinari, Francesco Vergani, and Ambra Borin explore how Participatory Design (PD) enriches design by enhancing social engagement. They employ Donna Haraway's "situated knowledge" to reframe PD for urban regeneration, fostering inclusive, context-specific dialogues in Milan's Nolo neighborhood. For this purpose, their work uses a "Situated Vocabulary", an ongoing research project activated within the urban living lab Nolo framework.

In *Amplifying the politics in Service Design,* Yoko Akama, Ann Light, and Shana Agid question the rapid growth of service design and its ties to neoliberal forces, urging reflection on its true impact. Thus, they advocate for the adoption of a reflexive approach, in order to explore everyday and dystopian service precedents to expose how service design can commodify social practices. They emphasize the need for a political lens in service design practice, highlighting paths towards ethical and transformative service design.

In *Designing Empathetic Service Experiences Using Storytelling Approach: A Case Study,* Priyank Sagar, Ravi Mahamuni, Vasundhara Agrawal, Shirish Darak, Vijaya Jori, and Sandeep Athavale integrate storytelling techniques into service design to evoke emotions and enhance empathetic service experiences. Focusing on Adolescents Living with HIV (ALHIV) in India, they craft interactive story media to allow informed decision-making about intimacy and HIV status disclosure. Their paper showcases the replicable orchestration of human and tech touchpoints, emphasizing storytelling's vital role in genuine user engagement and meaningful service experiences.

In *'SOSpesa' – Service Design Leveraging Neighborhood Solidarity Networks to Tackle Food Poverty, Food Surplus, and Sustainability of Local Commerce,* Davide Fassi, and Anna Meroni present a project that transforms a charitable initiative against food poverty into the innovative 'SOSpesa' in Milan's NoLo neighborhood. The paper details the shift from an activist initiative to a multifaceted service, focusing on solidarity, reducing food waste, and supporting local businesses. In addition, the authors discuss the strategy of engaging a network of local actors for sustainability while emphasizing the importance of maintaining grassroots engagement in scaling up social innovation.

In *Co-designing a collective food service of artisanal gastronomic products with entrepreneurial university students,* Larissa Farias, Carol Soares, Ivan Bursztyn, and Carla Cipolla detail a co-design process involving university students to create a food service centered on artisanal gastronomic products. Using a Design Science Research approach, their work unfolds through distinct yet interconnected cycles, i.e. relevance, design, and rigor, resulting in a collaborative

commercial service. The authors emphasize service design and co-design concepts, showcasing the systematic approach and tangible outcome. The findings offer potential for sustainable gastronomy entrepreneurship in academic settings and highlight the role of co-design and service design in fostering student entrepreneurship.

In *Sustainable Service Design meta-scenario for take-it-back services on white-good appliances,* Adele Cagnato Conte, Aguinaldo dos Santos, Ana Beatriz Avelino Barbosa, Bheatriz Silvano Graciano, Bruna Andrade, Carolina Daros, Gabriel Lied, and Júlio César do Amaral tackle the challenge of altering consumer disposal behaviors for household appliances. They propose a meta-scenario for a value-generating take-it-back service, fostering collaboration among consumers, manufacturers, and stakeholders in the electrical and electronic equipment industry. The study integrates IoT sensors and a digital platform, prioritizing transparency and sustainability in the consumer service experience. The research methodology, employing literature review and service design tools, explores the fusion of reverse logistics with emerging technologies. This approach, embodied in the meta-scenario, aligns with transforming consumer behavior and empowers their role as sustainability catalysts.

In *The role of User Experience for environmental sustainability of AI-infused Objects forming product-service ecosystems, Alice* Paracolli and Venanzio Arquilla stress the importance of evaluating the environmental sustainability of AI-infused objects in product-service ecosystems from a design standpoint. They outline three key AI-infused objects components and their respective environmental impacts, aiming to guide informed design decisions and increase awareness among designers.

In *Mapping Temporal Experience: accounting for felt time in service design,* Michael Arnold Mages and Stephen Neely emphasize the need to enhance service design practices by integrating diverse mapping methods that accurately represent service architectures. While existing methods acknowledge the significance of temporal experience, they often overlook crucial temporal dimensions. Their study proposes alternative methodologies to effectively depict evolving service experiences by focusing on the neglected dimension of kairotic time.

In *The Role of Service Design and Co-design in the Lifecycle of Online Communities: Cases from the Chinese Service Design Community,* Chenfan Zhang, Daniela Selloni, and Valentina Auricchio delve into the impact of COVID-19 and technological advancements on online communication, leading to a surge in online communities. They stress the importance of active participation for online community sustainability. The study employs participatory action research, focusing on the online Chinese Service Design Community (CSDC). Analyzing its development from 2019 to 2022 and utilizing the online community life cycle model, the authors demonstrate how service design and co-design contribute to the community's growth and long-term development.

In *Driving towards inclusion: Using a service design framework to investigate technology-induced inequalities,* Qiling Long, Dan Mu, Kin Wai Michael Siu, and Joseph R. Peissel investigate the interplay between technological advancement, service design, and societal inequalities. They propose a comprehensive framework leveraging the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) model and design methodologies to illuminate hidden dimensions of inequality within service design, exemplified through autonomous vehicle technology.

In *Why do Service Designers Struggle to Address Power Dynamics?* Audun Formo Hay, Josina Vink, Dagfinn Mørkrid Thøgersen, and Mari Suoheimo advocate for a broader perspective on power dynamics in service design, emphasizing the need to consider contextual factors beyond individual designer reflexivity. They propose leveraging ecological theories to identify and analyze inhibiting contextual factors, ultimately laying the groundwork for structural shifts to address power dynamics in service design more effectively.

In *Designing for Co-Production in a Territorial Lab for Mental Health,* Federico De Luca and Daniela Sangiorgi investigate co-production in mental health services involving informal actors, patients, and healthcare providers. Focusing on a community experience, CoLab Torre Cimabue, they identify key dimensions and pivotal factors for successful co-production, emphasizing the need for bridging the gap between service design and delivery for transformative impact.

In *Bubbles, currents and splashes: metaphors to make sense of innovation and learning practices in the public sector,* Isabella Brandalise and Caio Werneck explore how metaphors shape project-based training in the public sector. They used the metaphor of *a project as a collective diving*, and developed a set of related metaphors, such as *breathing, bubbles*, *currents,* and *splashes,* for offering new understandings for design in this specific sector.

In *Enhance local communities through Design: a holistic approach to regenerate rural environments,* Stefania Palmieri, Mario Bisson, Alessandro Ianniello, Riccardo Palomba, and Luca Botta explore leveraging the technological revolution and reconnection with the land to foster new connections, particularly in rural areas. They emphasize regenerative efforts and collective well-being through co-designed strategies aiming for local revitalization. This study introduces a theoretical framework guiding inventive processes, aiming to revive neglected and environmentally deteriorating areas while fostering meaningful community relations.