Claire Dennington

REFASHIONING SERVICE DESIGN

Designing for popular cultural service experience

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Abstract

Services are becoming ever more present in our everyday lives and cultural lifestyles, enabling new practices and shaping new values. In the entanglement of people, experiences, interactions, products, technology and media that shape services, meaning is circulated, and culture formed. This thesis explores a gap between Service Design and concepts from popular culture by inquiring how novel services can be shaped through the uptake and translation of cultural phenomena. It further explores the cultural influence such services have through shaping dynamic relationships between use, production, mediatization and consumption of cultural material and meaning, and circulation of symbolic value.

This thesis introduces *Trendslation,* an experiential Service Design approach that operationalizes a triple-staged semantic transformation of trends, to assist the service designer in designing for experiential services that are culturally informed and enacted. This contribution frames services in consumer and lifestyle domains as popular cultural constructs in the way that they offer mediatized interactions and experiences that are influential in the cultural interplay of meanings, materials and practices. This thesis further contributes with the practical tool of the experience-centric service journey, as a visual narrative and mapping of the flows of meaning that come into play across touchpoints and interactions over time. In light of this service-cultural view the notion of the cultural intermediary is applied as a framework to further unpack how Service Design, and the service designer, may more fully adopt and enact a cultural role in shaping experiential service offerings and details. This contributes to the field and practice of Service Design by highlighting the service designer as a cultural intermediary.

The work in this thesis is situated within a commercial business context, where three design explorations have been carried out through the application of an overall qualitative and open-ended Research through Design methodology, in collaboration with three major national and global brands in the areas of food and fashion apparel. Moving between practice and research, and qualitative methods and design techniques, the modes and mechanisms of meaning-construction in a Service Design view have been explored by designing trend-driven and conceptual service design artefacts. The design-led research explorations have further revealed connections between perspectives from Service Design and concepts from Popular Culture that are framed through six new concepts and a model, that jointly offer a positioning of Popular Cultural Service Design, and can be seen as an overall contribution to the field.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I am deeply grateful for the invaluable support of my supervisors Simon Clatworthy and Andrew Morrison. Thank you for your committed and generous guidance in seeing this through.

I am grateful for the support from the Institute of Design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), and would particularly like to thank my institute leader Rachel B. Troye, and all of my inspiring colleagues for continuous encouragement. I am grateful for every enlightening encounter with my forward-thinking PhD fellows and designer-researcher colleagues; and would especially like to thank Ted Matthews, Frida Almqvist and Karianne Rygh for colourful perspectives, and Natalia Agudelo for exceptional help with planning and tutoring.

I would like to thank the Center for Service Innovation (CSI) and the Research Council of Norway (NFR) for generously funding this work. My gratitude goes to all the business partners, and key people within each organisation, that I have had the privilege to work with. Thank you for keeping an open mind and welcoming me into your world.

Thanks to Henry Mainsah for discussions on methods, Synne Skjulstad for conversations on fashion and media, and Thomas Markussen for reading the first draft of this thesis.

My gratitude further goes to all the design students at AHO that I have had the pleasure to work with, and who never cease to amaze me. In particular I would like to thank Alice Smejkalova, Anath Betancourt, Ester Kaasa, Frida V D Drift Breivik, Frøya Thue, Karen Byskov, Melina Hozbari, Mengxue Zhou, Miryam Pippich, Palak Dudani, Paulina Buvinic, Simón Guzmán Sandoval, Sofie Thomassen, Thiago Freitas, Timo Treit, Trygve Shadi Restan, and Vilde Rebekka Aasen for their dedicated contributions to this work.

Lastly I am grateful for all the help, patience and continuous optimism from my family and friends. A particular thanks to my parents for reading, editing and encouraging me on, and to my son, for keeping me grounded and connected.

Claire Dennington
Oslo, January 2021

Figure 0.1 – Prefall, a service for fashion re-use. Together these images show examples of stylistic and experiential service details from Prefall, including a news feature about the service in a Norwegian business and lifestyle magazine, with the title 'inspiring reuse'. Source: Renate Torseth, Solveig Knutsen and Claire Dennington.

Preface

In my mid 20s in the early millennium, thanks to my then part-time job at one of Oslo's main sneaker stores, I owned far too many pairs of shoes than is acceptable for a meat-free, secondhand shopper, reading Naomi Klein. Lined up in the hallway of a shared rented apartment, were High top-, Low top-, Mid top classics and Three-stripes in fourfold colours, there were Pumps, Dunks and Desert Storms. I admit, it was excessive for my two bare feet. Yet, this cultural archive of branded signifiers was far from simply functional. It was emotional. It was symbolic. And it was meaningful.

An ambivalence between brand consumption and identity construction, and a fascination for popular cultural lifestyle, has followed me throughout my private and professional life - from serving branded burgers in my early teens and folding countless stacks of commercial clothing, to selling curated sneaker collectables and co-founding a cultural fanzine in Oslo. In my MA-thesis in Service Design at AHO (2007) I explored this feeling of ambiguity by looking into how branding could trigger better fashion practices, rather than focusing on fashion re-use from a sustainable perspective. This resulted in *Swopshop*, a service for the exchange of pre-worn fashion apparel. Continuing into the commercial fashion industry as a design professional, working with concept development, graphic design and visual merchandising, I gained valuable insight into corporate company policy and organisational culture. However, the rapid turnarounds, excess volumes and negative socio-ecological consequences made me leave the industry to embark on a journey into becoming a designer-researcher.

In 2012 I designed and developed *Prefall* (Figure 0.1), a service for fashion re-use, further exploring the dynamics of design and branding to offer an aesthetic experience in a second-hand fashion market, that at the time, was perceived by many as overly green, or slightly moth-eaten. My goal was to design a service that would entice and inspire shifts in consumption practices. Through creative collaborations with a network of cultural intermediaries, every detail of the service experience was considerately designed with the aim to convey some of that emotional and cultural value that had once made me a collector of footwear.

This thesis can be seen as a continuation of this private and professional popular cultural servitised journey in a web of service, culture, design, experience and meaning, all of which have been brought into this work.

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* For figures that are not by the main author, see full figure references Chapter 6, p. 201. These images have been accessed and retrieved from publicly available sources, including publicly open Instagram accounts. Examples of tools (Figure 2.2 & 2.3) and images of student work (Figure 3.6 - 3.10 and Figure 3.20 & 3.21) are printed with permission.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The changing character of Service Design

1.1.1 A dynamic field and practice

Entitled *Refashioning Service Design: Designing for popular cultural service experience*, this thesis explores the potential of the development of Service Design, where attention is given to perspectives from popular culture. It does so by investigating how Service Design may identify and translate cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details. This is approached by activating a research through design mode that inquires into the mechanisms of meaning-construction and semantic transformation of cultural phenomena, in the shape of trends, through Service Design. It explores ways we might extend practice and understanding of Service Design to adjust and adapt its cultural roles and influences in design and contemporary society. Briefly, this is comprised broadly of the semantic transformation in Design, an experiential focus in Service Design, the concept of the cultural intermediary, and the circular interplay of design, culture, media, and meaning.

The underlying motivation for researching into this area was inspired by my professional design practice within the fashion industry, together with observations of culturally located services appearing on the market within lifestyle-oriented industry sectors. Coming from practice within a domain where the design of products and branding strategies are highly trend-driven, culturally interdependent and embedded with intrinsic meaning, led me to question to what extent cultural meaning was mirrored in the innovative services emerging. In my view, the services were seemingly offering cross-platform service encounters, interactions and experiences in the intersection between cultural phenomena, design, media, popular practices, meaning, and value. The services appeared to be influenced by cultural phenomena, while at the same time moving through culture, shaping values, needs and practices. Service Design is a domain that has roots in Design disciplines,

yet there exists little research into the cultural interplay of meaning and value that is set in motion through, for example, the design of service offerings and touch-points from a Service Design perspective. In interconnecting design and cultural discourse, however, these matters are accounted for in terms of, for example the designer as a cultural intermediary that activates meaning through design, the signifying semantic characteristics of designed products and the circulation of meaning through consumption and use.

The study includes three explorative design research inquiries with industry partners within the areas of food and fashion. Through reflexive insights from these components, and their part in a thesis by compilation approach and its Exegesis, I suggest that the time may be right to conceptualize further a view of what I will describe in more detail as being 'a cultural view on Service Design'. This view allows us to approach Service Design and its relationships to design and creative industry sectors. It also permits us to explore its materialisation in contexts of popular cultural consumption and expression. Consumer-oriented domains, such as food and fashion, have long since moved from utilitarian functions and into areas connected to lifestyle and identity-construction (Arvidsson, 2006; Featherstone, 1987). What we eat, or what we choose to wear signify intrinsic meaning that communicates our values and beliefs. As product-focused brands and businesses are looking towards service design for means of moving towards experience-centricity, I question what these signifying aspects may mean for the field and practice of Service Design.

In this first introductory chapter I draw up the main issues and challenges that frame this work, before I present my overall research aim and the research questions that motivate this study, together with a contextualization of the site of this research. I make a brief account of the reflexive and design-driven mode of research and its partners and participants, before I summarize my publications and offer an overview of the thesis structure. In closing this chapter I outline my key research contributions, and reflect upon some limitations and constraints.

1.2 Service Design and new cultural connections

1.2.1 Culturally located services

To briefly fill out the claims I present, let's first examine the two areas of new services I mention above, namely food and fashion, before moving on to some of the details that allowed me to develop them as a professional

designer and a designer-researcher in the making. I mention food and fashion because they point to emerging and changing contexts of the cultural accessibility, appropriation and exchange of products, interaction and services within culturally located experiences and use.

Firstly, new food delivery services today offer multiple choices attuned to contemporary and large-scale sociocultural movements (Shin & Bae, 2019). These services are offering more than just "food as products". They are offering experiential and more meaningful food encounters. As consumers, we can now choose to order, for example, produce that is local, organic, and in season[1]- to local, artisan, and hand made products[2], or order in from social enterprises that support both good food and better living conditions[3].

Secondly, within fashion, we meet innovative services that offer new consumption practices, through trend-aligned and multi-media experiences (Rocamora, 2017). Examples include rental services for luxury handbags that most people could never afford to own[4] and services that offer curated pre-owned and high-end fashion[5]. The design-rich, aesthetic and stylistic factors are communicative and aspirational for certain types of consumers. The implication is that Service Design is cast into the highly mediatized, trend-sensitive and identity constructing characteristics of fashion.

Lifestyle domains, such as fashion with a focus on apparel, offer interesting insight into the cross-section between, and entanglements of, areas such as consumerism, branding, identity construction and popular cultural influence. The uptake and translation of trends into products and marketing elements create a domain that is trend sensitive, dynamic and commercial, yet can be highly personal. Intrinsic meaning is conveyed through several layers, by way of values, products and practices. It operates on a highly competitive market that both influences, and is influenced by, contemporary culture, use, value and meaning.

In the development of Service Design over the past decade we see a growing presence and offerings as to ways brands and businesses in cultural and

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1   See https://www.aarstiderne.com

2   See https://www.mouth.com

3   See https://www.eatoffbeat.com

4   See https://www.bagborroworsteal.com

5   See https://www.vestiairecollective.com

consumer product-oriented domains are seeking support towards a service-centric view. If Service Design is to take a stronger position in lifestyle focused and commercial markets, there may be potential in taking into account how services are increasingly embedded in our everyday cultural lives and lifestyles. Yet, this is not currently debated or discussed within the field. As new services that seem attuned to and aligned with contemporary culture are appearing on the market, I contemplate how this may surely bear implications for Service Design theory and practice.

If there is potential in viewing Service Design as a popular cultural option, I for one see the need to open a discussion of the contemporary cultural role and prospective of Service Design discourse and practice. As a problem domain, this warrants further investigation into Service Design's cultural connections and influences, the service designer's cultural role, and the design of service constructs that convey meaning in a contemporary cultural and service-centred view. Further, this offers an opportunity to address the increasing need to see the design of services and their cultural orientations in facing the changing social and environmental conditions that Design can help challenge (Manzini, 2007), as in regards to urgent matters of developing long-lasting sustainable practices, for example through resource and material reuse, in which services are connected in wider service ecologies. These are complex relations, and I consider how there may well be potential for Service Design in taking an active role when providing interfaces between users of services, and connection to cultural experience, identity, and expression.

1.2.2 The emergence of cultural experiential phenomena and Service Design

The experiential and cultural characteristics of new services that I observed show networks of multiple modes of expressions, products and practices in which meaning is communicated. I then question what the role of Service Design could be in this web of meaning.

One specific example that sparked my early enquiry into exploring the notion of Service Design's cultural reflexivity was the dining concept Conflict Kitchen in Pittsburgh, USA (2010-2017). Conflict Kitchen solely served cuisine from countries with which the US is in conflict. Initiated by professor Jon Rubin and co-director Dawn Weleski, the aim of this art-based initiative was to expand the engagement the public have to food, culture and politics by offering an experiential opportunity for customers to view and experience another side of the conflicted country's story.

Conflict Kitchen operated in iterations connected to new countries and political views, shifting the whole dining experience alongside it (Figure 1.1). The cuisine itself was aligned to the current country, along with the visual and stylistic elements of the interior, graphic design and social media content. Talks, film screenings, concerts and virtual cooking classes were offered to bring the public into a platform for conversations and building tolerance (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.1 – Shifting experiential characteristics of the dining experience Conflict Kitchen. The images show the exterior of the Cuban, Iranian and Venezuelan versions. (Conflict Kitchen, 2016).

Figure 1.2 – Conflict Kitchen's website illustrates the experiential focus on food, aesthetics and politics through style of photos, tone-of-voice and content tabs. (Conflict Kitchen, 2016).
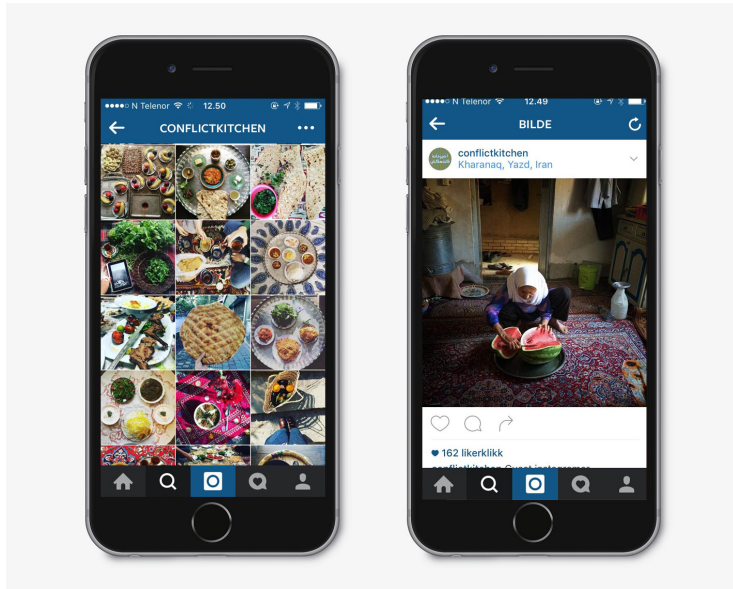
Figure 1.3 – Cross-platform engagement. Images from Conflict Kitchen's Instagram account show experiential consistency throughout social media platforms. (Conflict Kitchen, 2016). Mock-up by the author.

Figure 1.4 – Conflict Kitchen billboard art installation. The arts-initiated project created experiential touchpoints that conveyed the tone-of-voice and political aesthetic experience. (Conflict Kitchen, 2013).

On social media, which is an increasingly important element of Service Design's communicative construction, guest contributors live-casted interviews and news from the represented country, to involve customers' in a more meaningful dining experience (Figure 1.3). Conflict Kitchen further re-invested funds in educational programmes, performances and publications, extending the experiential (Figure 1.4).

Conflict Kitchen was an arts-initiated project with a political focus, operated through, among others, support from the Frank-Ratchye Studio for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University. It influenced me to contemplate how this innovative, conceptual and cross-media food experience was offering new knowledge and shaping sensibilities through its creative, cultural, and aesthetic multiple modes of communication, and in turn influencing contemporary culture and practices (see e.g. Ballantyne-Brodie, 2018; Shin & Bae, 2019). I questioned what exactly it was that made me, from just reviewing the dining experience online, want to travel across the Atlantic to stand in line for a falafel, fresh ideas and fruitful conversations.

Another service example in the market that I find interesting, and that has grown rapidly over the past years is the French luxury fashion resale service Vestiaire Collective[6]. The company's curated pre-owned fashion items, their editorial-like images and consistent social media presence, their luxuriously crafted packaging, trend focused pop-up stores and curated collaborations with key actors with high cultural capital, are all elements that contribute to frame pre-worn fashion items as something desirable and coveted. These communicative and signifying elements have contributed to shift the meaning of fashion re-use from something 'undesirable', towards an attractive and contemporary fashion experience, by showing a high level of rich visual, experiential and aesthetic consistency throughout the service offering and details (e.g. Ferraro et al., 2016; Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015).

1.2.3 Working outwards from key current concerns in Service Design

With my previous experience and practice from designing and developing the fashion re-selling service *Prefall,* as noted in the Preface of this Exegesis, and further accounted for in Publication 1, I considered how these services seemed to encapsulate certain cultural phenomena that were translated into

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6   See https://www.vestiairecollective.com

every detail of the experiential encounters, and in this, signifying intrinsic meaning, which in turn could be seen to impact contemporary cultural practices and values. This raised a number of problematics that I found of interest and relevance to address in this thesis. If services are being shaped by and through cultural phenomena, the question arises as to how Service Design might take a more active role in this service cultural cross section. This raises the issue of what this may mean for the service designer in engaging with designing for cultural meaning and value. What these phenomena have to tell us in research terms then needs to be investigated. Consequently, we need to see whether there is connected emerging research on Service Design and contemporary culture, and what characterizes it. These matters of problem framing and finding need to be seen in the context of existing and predominant views and approaches in Service Design, their underlying world views, and in evident and changing practices.

Service Design is a multi-faceted field with theoretical and practical roots in both Design, and interconnecting areas such as Management and Marketing. The objective of Service Design is to aid innovation in service organizations (Clatworthy, 2009). Services are described as activities, processes and interactions, in which the customer is seen as a co-creator of value in use (e.g. Edvardsson et al., 2005; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). This complex nature of services, which include both tangible and intangible aspects and human factors (Kimbell, 2011) has led to the description and development of tools, methods and approaches for deconstructing such complexity to assist the service designer in shaping new service solutions (e.g. Miettinen et al., 2012; Segelström, 2010). If the service designer is to design for experiential opportunities that evoke contemporary cultural resonance, meaning and value, we will need to situate and unpack the approaches and tools that can assist in such service design centred meaning making activities.

Service Design operates with a diverse range of service provision, from private to public. The current and predominant focus within the field seems strongly directed towards areas within public services with a focus on e.g. co-creational innovation. The field is also contributing towards social innovation, looking into systemic and organizational transformation (Manzini, 2008; Meroni, 2006). In commercial business terms, Service Design has had significant impact within more traditional service providers such as in banking, telecom and insurance, with a focus on the customer experience (Clatworthy, 2013; da-Motta Filho, 2017). However, I find that commercial, and contemporary cultural connections to the domain are sparse.

1.3 Service Design, consumer culture and lifestyles

1.3.1 Design and connections to culture

Within design fields that connect to cultural consumer and lifestyle segments, such as in Product Design, the construction of cultural meaning and value through design is widely discussed by scholars within both the design field, as well as from a cultural perspective (du Gay, 1998; Julier, 2000; Press & Cooper, 2003). For example, Press and Cooper (2003) see the designer as a creator of culture, or what may be characterised as a type of cultural intermediary. A cultural intermediary is seen as a creative individual and professional who actively constructs, frames and disseminates cultural meaning and value through their creative practices (Bourdieu, 1984; Maguire & Matthews, 2012). In a product view, Toni-Matti Karjalainen (2004) and Klaus Krippendorff (2006) pose the semantic characteristics of designed products as signifiers of intrinsic meaning through their functional and aesthetic attributes. Products are further entangled in a cultural circuit of consumption, mediation and use, as described by du Gay et al. (2013). Further, contemporary and popular culture is inherently tied to design through such interplay of consumption, production and mediation of cultural meaning and value (Barker & Jane, 2016; du Gay et al., 2013).

However, in Service Design discourse, such influential and interconnected views on the role of the designer as a cultural intermediary and the designer as contributing to creating culture (Press and Cooper, 2003), and contemporary culture, are not yet prominent in conversations in research and practice. As I describe at the beginning of this chapter, services on the market seem increasingly connected to cultural areas, yet current Service Design discourse lacks an inclusion of more contemporary and especially popular cultural views apparent for example in Interaction Design. In a practice-oriented perspective there is also seemingly a lack of approaches and tools that can assist in the design for such culturally located service encounters and experiences. This leads me to question how Service Design and the services designer may take more active roles in the construction and conveyance of cultural service meaning and value and their connections and distinctions within consumer culture and processes of changing lifestyles.

1.3.2 Cultural material and meaning for Service Design innovation

Service Design has increasingly engaged with the experiential and shifts of focus from the design of services, to include focus also on their contexts of

use and influence. While to date there may still be limited work concerning Service Design and its cultural orientation, here exists a minor strand within the field that investigates the experiential, originating from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). Growing out of a focus on New Service Development, branding and the customer experience (Clatworthy, 2013), this work includes notions of the innovation potentials of 'meaning' towards the experiential. This is suggested by way of the semantic transformation of brand constructs and values into service details and experiences (da-Motta Filho, 2017) and by operationalizing sacred and ritualistic material towards shared meaning construction in a Service Design view (Matthews, 2017).

Also in interconnecting fields there is a presence of discussions concerning cultural service relations. In service research, for example, cultural economical dimensions of services are described (Ellger, 2001), and in sustainable fashion discourse perspectives on the potential of service design and cultural aspects are surfacing, such as the need for fashion to take a step towards Service Design to identify motivational factors for introducing new practices (Niinimäki, 2013; Rissanen et al., 2018). I find, however, that there are few extensive or more elaborated views on cultural and meaning-constructing aspects or the cultural intermediary roles within and from Service Design such as found in related design and cultural discourse. The sparse work concerning Service Design and cultural connections may indicate a growing awareness, or it could be sparse due to a conception of the field and popular culture having low relevance. Yet, we see services, such as the ones described, which sit within contemporary contexts of lifestyle and consumer-oriented areas. To investigate this gap and the preliminary notions and observations accounted for in this introduction, I draw up three main research questions presented in the following section.

1.4 Research aims and questions

1.4.1 Overall research aim and objective of work

The overall aim of this research is to explore Service Design and new cultural connections to raise questions and highlight topics that may bring forward new transdisciplinary persepctives and conversations between theory and practice within a commercial business context, and to inquire into how Service Design may utilize cultural material and means for innovating service offerings and details. In doing so, the objective of this study seeks to examine how the service designer can design for services that align to contemporary life and lifestyles, through the active participation of the designer researcher.

This participation takes the form of heuristic design collaborations with industry partners, in an overall qualitative research through design mode.

My work aims to contribute to both the academic field and practice of Service Design in a move towards a broader cultural stance by providing theoretical and practical ways forward to assist the service designer in designing for services that are shaped by, and through culture. Further, it seeks to contribute with theoretical or practice-oriented knowledge that can be brought into consumer-oriented and product focused businesses, and to provide an understanding of the intermediary roles that Service Design may fulfil when operating in wider cultural and shifting landscapes.

1.4.2 Research questions

To address these preliminary notions of Service Design and its contemporary cultural interconnectedness, I draw up three corresponding research questions. For investigating how the field and practice of service design can move towards a broader cultural stance, I ask:

> How can Service Design identify and translate cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details?

This first question leads to the second, in which I seek to contribute to Service Design practice by providing a practical way forward to assist the service designer in designing for services that are shaped by, and through culture.

My second research question asks:

> What practical approaches or tools can assist the service designer in translating cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details?

Together these two questions inform my third research question that aims to provide understanding of the intermediary positions that Service Design may fulfil when operating in a cultural landscape. I ask:

> In what way can, or does, Service Design act as a cultural intermediary?

Seen in relation to one another, these three research questions together aspire to arrive at contributions to Service Design theory and practice in three principal ways. First, they seek to provide an understanding of how services may be more fully positioned and understood as cultural constructs. Second, they investigate how the service designer can design for services that are culturally located by means of approaches or tools that can assist the service designer. Third, they motivate for better understanding of the cultural intermediary roles that may come into play through Service Design innovation that is culturally inflected and reflexively shaped.

1.5 Research through design

1.5.1 A reflexive research-practice methodology

To explore these three research questions my study follows a qualitative and explorative practice-based action research methodology. I adopt an overall open-ended 'Research through Design' mode. This entails how "design knowledge is knowing-in-action, revealed in and by actual designing" (Schön, 1992, p. 131). The designer is in continuous negotiation and conversation with the materials of the design situation (Schön, 1992), accessing knowledge by engaging in and reflecting upon design activities, the making of the artefacts, and the design artefacts themselves (Cross, 2001). This reflexive and constructivist mode of research accesses design practice to open new avenues of knowledge and meaning, rather then seeking to arrive at one final scientific and 'right' answer. As Gaver (2012, p. 940) describes "The goal of conceptual work in research through design is not to develop theories that are never wrong, it is to create theories that are *sometimes right"*.

This study inquires into how Service Design may take a more conscious cultural role through such reflexive practice. This has been accessed through three design explorations between serial and expansive design experimentations (Krogh et al., 2015), situating my professional practice in real life business collaborations with national and global brands within food and fashion apparel, accounted for in the following section. The study investigates how Service Design can transform cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details, and what kind of experiential approaches or tools can assist the service designer to design for services that are perceived as culturally meaningful through the designing of conceptual service design artefacts.

Toggling between research methods and creative and visual design tools and techniques has brought forward insights and analytical findings that have been implemented back into practice and education. This in turn has allowed me to develop an approach that has been operationalized to bring forward additional views and theoretical framings through generative loops of interpretation, synthesis, analysis and reflection. Here I acknowledge the focus that Celia Lury and fellow editors and authors in the collection connecting social science and design inquiry entitled Routledge Handbook of Interdisciplinary Research Methods give to the '-*ing* in design inquiry (Lury et al., 2018). This refers to an approach to interdisciplinary methods as potential catalysts that enables the designer researcher to "intervene in and make the present active" (Lury, 2018, p. 21). The 'do-ing' of lateral methods, such as drawing, mapping or diagramming, allow for the movement across and between cross-disciplinary thinking and making.

In Chapter 3 I elaborate how this has involved me in negotiating different, but related roles as a design practitioner and professional, a design educator and a design researcher. As a design educator and professional I have connected my expertise to my role also as a design researcher in engaging in qualitative, situated and contextualised inquiry into designing services with cultural orientations. In addition to my own design work and professional practice, the design work of 17 Master's students from my host department and institution, the Institute of Design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), contribute to this design-research work through two courses that I have co-taught and tutored (see also Chapter 3). The students have produced conceptual service design artefacts by operationalizing the experiential approach in the making which has allowed for open-ended conversations and semi-structured interviews with the students in dedicated learning environments, participative observation of students in their engagement with the material and design process, and in feedback dialogues and presentation sessions with partners, and analysis of the student's annotated research diaries, visual essays and design artefacts which has allowed for interpretation of multiple voices to arrive at rich accounts of data (Geer & Sweeney, 2012).

1.5.2 Contextualizing the research via heuristic design and business collaborations

The research that I present in this thesis has been undertaken as a part of the

Centre for Service Innovation (CSI)[7]. The CSI was one of 38 Norwegian centers for research-based innovation (Senter for Forskningsdrevet Innovasjon). The Research Council of Norway, educational partners and participating business partners jointly funded the CSI. The total CSI budget was 164 million NOK over eight years (2011-2019). The CSI aimed to increase the innovation capacities and commercial success of leading Norwegian service providers.

The vision of CSI has been to support innovation in service organizations through collaborations between research and commercial partners. These Norwegian partners included the national Postal service (Posten), the main telecom company (Telenor), and a leading grocery-wholesaling group (NorgesGruppen). The sub-goals of the CSI included enhancing the service innovation capabilities of its business and research partners, and to improve the commercial success of Norwegian service providers' service innovation activities. My research was situated within the work package *Service Design and the Customer Experience*.

Drawing on multiple business partners both from within and outside of the Centre, my role was oriented towards the innovation potentials with regard to customer experience. My thesis has therefore developed an approach to assist in designing for culturally located experiences and encounters, and is connected to an developing area of cultural and Service Design relations (e.g. Matthews, 2014, 2017). It can be seen as part of a growing perspective on Service Design and experience-centered views developed within CSI (Clatworthy, 2013; da-Motta Fihlo, 2017; Matthews, 2017). In this regard, my research is not a single venture, but part of a linked inquiry between senior researchers and doctoral students, two of them at AHO, both with experience in design, business, and culture.

My work can be seen in tune with, and a compliment to, work undertaken in a related doctoral study by Ted Matthews. His PhD, entitled *Sacred Services,* seeks to understand how experience-centric services can be informed by theories relating to the sacred. Matthews' published work also contributes to a wider view and cultural 'platform' for advancing cultural aspects of Service Design (Matthews, 2016; Matthews 2017). I take this up in the literature review in Chapter 2, as well as in my own later framing of a popular cultural

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7   See https://www.nhh.no/en/research-centres/digital-transformation-hub/about/

and trend-sensitive service design perspective in Chapter 4. In my case, I situate the experiential and cultural in terms of what I term *Trendslation*, which I define in Publication 2 as an experiential approach for a triple-staged semantic transformation of trends into service offerings and details (Dennington, 2018). I would like to highlight that my study is not one of trends or fashion, but how these areas may be reconfigured and realigned in services that are located in cultural use, how the service designer may access and apply trends as a means for Service Design innovation, and to explore ways in which meaning is constructed and circulated through the design of culturally informed services, and the mediating and intermediary roles that come into play.

1.5.3 On practice, partners and production

Throughout the course of this research, I have collaborated with three commercial business partners, within the areas of food and fashion apparel. In common for these partners was their need for assistance to explore new service experiential opportunities beyond their current product focus. Following I will outline some details of each partner.

> Partner 1 (P1). *Kiwi* – A Norwegian grocery brand
> The first partnership was formed in 2016 directly through CSI, together with NorgesGruppen[8] who were participating partners in CSI. Their grocery brand Kiwi is one of Norway's main grocery chains. Kiwi has 650 stores nationally, with a focus on low priced and healthy food.

> Partner 2 (P2). *Bik Bok* – A Norwegian young women's fashion brand
> This business collaboration together with Bik Bok[9] was initiated privately in 2017. This partnering brand was not directly connected to CSI. Bik Bok is a commercial and mid-price fashion brand for young women. The brand focuses on in-trend fashion apparel and operates through 270 branded stores across the Scandinavian market, as well as through their branded online store. In addition Bik Bok apparel is distributed through a European e-commerce company.

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8   See https://www.norgesgruppen.no/norgesgruppen-in-english/

9   See https://www.bikbok.com

Partner 3 (P3). A Global sports and lifestyle brand
The third partnership was initiated in 2018 through an existing collaboration between the brand and AHO, and neither was this company a direct partner in the CSI. The brand is a global actor that holds a leading position as a globally recognized sports and lifestyle brand. The brand is also seen as an influential cultural brand, with a strong position within popular culture. The brand operates through branded concept stores in most major cities worldwide, as well as through branded online stores, shops, outlets and independent shops internationally. This brand is anonymized owing to privacy issues.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

1.6.1 Overview

These three partnerships have generated three design research explorations in which I have investigated my research questions in a dynamic, reflexive and open-ended mode of inquiry. Each exploration has brought forward findings that have been implemented back into practice, to inform and develop the experiential approach and cultural Service Design connections. These are described across the attached publications, and further unpacked through this Exegesis.

This doctoral dissertation adopts the format of a publication-based 'thesis by compilation' (Morrison, 2017). It is built on the developmental design-research work of four of four publications that are compiled in the process of devising an Exegesis that consists of five chapters. The aim of this Exegesis is to lift an analytical view that connects Service Design with concepts from popular culture, supported by insights, findings, and analysis from practice.

1.6.2 Exegesis

This Exegesis is arranged in five chapters, of which this introductory chapter is included. The Exegesis further unpacks a cultural and experiential notion of Service Design, brought forward through my publications. Following the five chapters, the full versions of the four publications are included.

Chapter 2 draws up the main perspectives from existing literatures that shape the background for this thesis, and accentuate the identified gaps that I address through my research questions. The chapter introduces key notions from Service Design with regards to its design orientation, the customer

experience and service design approaches. The semantic transformation in design, and meaning-construction in a cultural design view is addressed. Furthermore the concept of the cultural intermediary is accounted for, as is aspects from popular culture.

Chapter 3 positions this study within an overall explorative and qualitative Research through Design mode. The chapter consists of two main parts. First I detail the methodology, methods and design techniques that have been used to inquire into my research questions. The second part describes the main insights and findings from the three design-research and business located explorations analytically, and draws up an account for the development of the *Trendslation* approach.

Chapter 4 emphasises one main conceptual theme that is brought forward as an overall contribution based on the data and findings presented in Chapter 3. Six key concepts that together shape this overall view are outlined and detailed, and seek to close the identified gaps. These six key concepts are explored through examples from my design-led research explorations, together with additional examples from areas where services, fashion, popular culture and media connect.

Chapter 5 offers a summary of my main research findings and contributions, reflections on methodoligcal limitations of the study and discusses some implications for the field, for practice and in education. The chapter pinpoints two areas for further research before conclusive thoughts and reflections bring the study to closure.

Together these five chapters further unpack 'the cultural Service Design view' that has surfaced through the individual publications. In the following section I will briefly summarize the main concepts, themes and arguments of each publication.

1.7 Summary of publications

Overall the four publications look into the cultural roles and potentials of Service Design, the design and development of a practical approach and tool for the semantic transformation of trends into new service offerings and touch-points, and the service designer's role as a cultural intermediary in operating between cultural material and meaning.

Publication 1

Dennington, C. (2017). Service design as a cultural intermediary. Translating cultural phenomena into services. *The Design Journal, 20*(suppl. 1), 600-613. https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1353 008

In Publication 1 I explore Service Design through a cultural intermediary framing to inquire into the cross-sections between the field and concepts from connecting design and cultural theory. The publication examines existing service design literature regarding the customer experience, and the semantic transformation of brand values to service, and further devlops discussions of design, culture and meaning-construction from interconnecting design and cultural domains. This is brought into light through the theoretical framing of the semantic transformation in design, and the potentials of the service designer's multi-staged semantic transformation of cultural phenomena in shaping new services, through an analytical lens of the concept of the cultural intermediary.

Further, examples of culturally located services highlight this possible transformation of cultural phenomena, in what I identify as cultural trends. I provide a case example from which I pull forward four main findings that together shape a direction of meaning innovation in service design by way of a triple-staged semantic transformation of trends into meaning, and further into service offerings and experiential details that convey and communicate intrinsic meaning. Publication 1 concludes by advising that Service Design can develop its cultural intermediary role to expand its cultural connection to design for services that are culturally framed and experienced, and in so doing, that there is a need to develop practical means that can assist the service designer in such trend transformation.

Publication 2

> Dennington, C. (2018). Trendslation. An experiential method for
> semantic translation in service design. In A. Meroni, A. Medina &
> B. Villari (Eds.), *ServDes2018:* Service *Design Proof of Concept:
> Proceedings of the ServDes2018 Conference* (pp. 1049-1063).
> Milan, Italy: Linköping University Electronic Press. Retrieved from
> https://ep.liu.se/ecp/150/ecp18150.pdf.

The study presented in Publication 2 looks further into the triple-semantic
transformation in a practice-oriented view, and introduces the development
of Trendslation, a systemized and experiential Service Design approach
that has been shaped through research-led design explorations with two
major business partners, within the areas of food and fashion apparel. This
publication further explores the theme of the service designer as a cultural
intermediary when utilizing trends as a source material for innovation when
designing for meaningful services in a business context. I inquire into how
meaning is constructed and transferred through design, and look to areas
of fashion and meaning-construction by way of style and aesthetics. I draw
up the three procedural stages of semantic transformation that shape the
Trendslation approach by exemplifying design-work with a focus on the
identification of trends, the synthesis and communication of meaning through
design-rich and visual methods, and through the design of culturally aligned
service offerings and touch-points.

This publication brings forward three findings that entail the potential
of trends as a material source for shaping and modeling services and
experiential factors, the service designer in enacting a cultural intermediary
role, and Trendslation as an early, flexible and dynamic model of the uptake
of cultural practices, expertise and insights into the semantic transformation.
Publication 2 highlights the need for additional support for the service
designer in the shape of a practical tool for conveying and communicating
experiential aspects and meaning throughout the service journey. Drawn
together the publication supports the emerging view that service design can
take a stronger cultural role with a need to develop a richer, more elaborated
cultural perspective.

Publication 3

> Dennington, C. (2018) Better fashion futures? From product focus
> to service experiencing. *Online proceedings of the What's Going on?*
> *Global Fashion Conference, October, 2018, London, UK.* Retrieved
> from http://gfc-conference.eu/proceedings/

In Publication 3 I propose Service Design as an approach to designing
for highly experiential, culturally aligned and meaningful services in a
sustainable fashion context. The publication explores synergies between
Service Design and views from Sustainable Fashion, and the activation
of cultural resonance and value in designing for cultural and experiential
encounters across time and touch-points to engage consumers in better
fashion practices. Publication 3 introduces and describes the experiential
customer journey and experiential touch-points as means for designing
for holistic and stylistically consistent service experiences that may fit the
nature of fashion. The experiential aspects are accounted for through a case
example of one conceptual service design artefact developed through the
activation of the Trendslation approach in an explorative research design
project with a global sports and lifestyle brand. I motivate that Service
Design that is culturally reflexive can be a useful approach for fashion brands
and businesses as a means to move beyond product-centricity toward an
experience focus, also beyond the point of product purchase, and to introduce
new practices in a more sustainable and circular framing.

Publication 4

> Dennington, C. & Morrison, A. (under review, 2020). Designing
> for culturally located service encounters. *International Journal of*
> *Design*.

This co-authored article further unpacks how Service Design may more fully
adopt and enact a cultural approach to shaping experiential services. The
publication draws on findings and insights from the design-rich and visual
mixed methods that have been activated through three research-led Service
Design explorations with the commercial business partners in consumer and
lifestyle-oriented domains. It inquires into how service design may be shaped
by and through popular cultural resources, and how Service Design, and
the service designer are active contributors in the construction, circulation
and dissemination of cultural meaning and value. Furthermore, Publication
4 focuses on aspects of consumption, identity-construction, lifestyle and

mediatization in a popular cultural light, and explores the signifying aspects of new practices that culturally located services enable, before introducing the notion of co-creation of cultural service value. This highlights views of the cultural intermediaries of Service Design, which are discussed, and the practical design tool of the experiential service journey is detailed. Publication 4 suggests a need for drawing closer links between the design of experiential services and culturally located service encounters to inform the further development and enactment of culturally infused views of Service Design, towards creating a popular cultural connection. It also identifies the potential in framing services more broadly as cultural acts, reshaping relations between services, products, experience, media and symbolic and cultural values.

1.8 Key Contributions

The design research undertaken in this study has resulted in four main contributions to Service Design theory and practice. Each contribution can be seen in relation to my research questions, as presented above.

My first contribution offers a model that connects aspects of Service Design with perspectives from Popular Culture. This model of Popular Cultural Service Design is joined up by six new concepts that I frame in light of this service popular cultural connection. The concepts are: *popular cultural services, popular cultural service experience, trend-driven service design, the experience-centric service journey, designing for cultural service design and value,* and *service design cultural intermediaries*. Together these contributions provide additions to an evolving body of Service Design theory with a focus on meaningful and cultural aspects.

Secondly I contribute to Service Design practice through the development of an experiential and practice-oriented approach, that I term *Trendslation* (Dennington, 2018). This approach provides a triple-staged semantic transformation of trends into service offerings and details. The approach has been developed through, and for practice, and has further informed the positioning of a cultural reflexive Service Design.

The third contribution from my research is the practical tool of the experience-centric service journey for assisting the service designer when designing for stylistically consistent and meaning-centred service experiences. This practice-oriented contribution entails the identification of culturally informed touch-points.

Finally, the fourth contribution is a view that asserts the service designer in a cultural intermediary position, as a professional translator of meaning into service design details. This contribution also entails views of new intermediary roles that surface through culturally aligned services. These contributions are discussed and reflected on in my publications, further elaborated and exemplified in Chapter 4, and summarized in Chapter 5.

1.9 Toward reflections and prospects

1.9.1 Some limitations and constraints

Being situated within the commercial business context of CSI has brought some reflections regarding limitations and constraints. For designers working in consumer markets, I think there often exists a challenge in fine-tuning a balance between personal values and beliefs, and commercial interests. At least this is an issue that I see myself constantly reflecting upon. Finding myself back within a commercial business context for this PhD, after leaving the commercial fashion industry some years earlier due to its unsustainable impact, certainly evoked a sense of ambiguity for me. In one sense I felt certain constraints of the Research Centre I was connected to, meaning that my work needed to reflect some sense of viability and not move too far into speculative, political or hyper-conceptual directions. However, in another sense, I have seen this as an opportunity to contribute in creating change from within companies that can forge major impact, by using my designer agency to contribute to design for better solutions. The fact that my work is situated within the economic framing of a partly partner-funded research centre brings forward issues of dynamics and relational aspects, as well as matters of bias, which I address in Chapter 3.

The role of the designer in commercial business contexts over the past decades can certainly be looked upon with critique - as problematic, even emblematic, regarding issues of mass consumerism in areas of lifestyle consumption. The designer's intermediary role in negotiating and translating cultural meaning into coveted products and branding strategies contributes to fuelling an ever enduring market igniting new wants, needs and desires. I recognize the fact that in most established lifestyle businesses, rather then implementing design strategically into the organisational core, the (product) designer's role is often situated in the buying department, subject to pressure of tight margins, cost efficiency and fast paced turnarounds, with little or no room to exert matters of developmental or critical agency.

With this in mind, I acknowledge that my role as a designer researcher, connected to a recognized educational institution and well-funded research centre is one of privilege that may allow for agency and access, that may not be within reach for a designer as an employee within an organisation. However, increasing awareness of the role of the designer as a change-agent, in for example areas of social innovation (Manzini, 2007) or design for public services (Vink, 2019), brings forward the designer as an advocate for change through user-centred, co-creative and innovative service design means. These roles or emerging types of agency for the service designer and researcher I believe could be transferred to commercial actors. For example, this could extend to bridging across organisational silos through trans-disciplinary teams that include diverse design competency, marketing and management allowing for multiple voices to be heard. In Chapter 5 I further discuss this dynamic and changing service designer role.

Finally, I would also like to mention that researching into an area that is in constant flux has not been without challenges. Services are developing with immensely high speed as new technologies, new media platforms and new business models are introduced. From one year to another new services have disrupted common practices and reshaped everyday practices, with a lot of services reaching new highs both globally, and locally here in Norway, within the years from starting this research journey in 2015, until today.

1.9.2 Changing 'landscapes' of Service Design

Lucy Kimbell (2011) has observed how worldviews in research into Service Design have been changing. Along with the maturing of Service Design as a specific sub-discipline of Design (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011) we have seen the rapid rise of services impacting areas and experience related to mobility, consumption and communication. Unexpected global disruption, such as by the current Covid-19 pandemic, has cast services into ever more important roles in enabling new practices and shaping new values. Researching into areas within this fast-paced shifting landscape has at times called for the need to set my own constraints and limitations to try to capture parts of the essence of a field and practice that are undergoing constant development.

The consequences of this may be that some examples, observations or insights may already seem out-dated, even over the course of time from submitting this thesis until it exists in print. My efforts have been directed to working with what is emergent and current; in the final chapter I discuss

some of the implications and possible directions and developments of an anticipatory and futures-facing perspective on Service Design.

1.9.3 Developing a cultural view of Service Design-driven innovation

The current lack of contemporary cultural connections and influence in Service Design calls, I believe, for a need to elaborate more fully an understanding of the field and practice in contemporary consumer and user contexts. I question if it is time for Service Design to create new connections to explore the potentials of meaning-constructing aspects that could point Service Design in a more culturally sensitive direction. I see a space of opportunity to investigate the cultural reflexivity of Service Design within a business context, towards innovation of meaning in the design of services influenced by cultural phenomena. In this sense, as the title of this thesis suggests, the work presented seeks to better understand how we may 'refashion' Service Design, by developing new interdisciplinary connections to better equip the field and practice as it moves towards areas of lifestyle consumption and their related experiences, practices, meanings and values.

In the next chapter I look to a diverse literature that has been compiled and connected to inform and further untangle these preliminary notions and help locate the existing and changing research 'landscapes' of Service Design.

Chapter 2 Mapping related research

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Orientation to transdisciplinarity

This chapter draws together an overview of literature that helps to situate my research, in addition to my own practice, as described in Chapter 1 and elaborated further in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I start by describing Service Design as a multi-faceted domain with a clear linkage to Product and Interaction Design, and as a field that has incorporated business aspects from Marketing and Management. Following this, the chapter describes a recent focus within Service Design practice and research in the area of the customer experience, including its relation to Service Dominant Logic.

I then move on to present a perspective on Service Design through a Design lens, using cultural and meaning-focused aspects from related design disciplines. I investigate cultural relevance and meaning by way of design and the designer's role in constructing and conveying cultural meaning, and the notion of a semantic transformation in design. These are established domains within other design disciplines, yet published research in Service Design is not strongly characterised by contributions from cultural theory, studies and practices. I conclude by showing a need for research into connections between service design and popular culture.

Figure 2.1 on the following page shows a visual mapping of the research landscape that this thesis builds on. The analogy of the crystal formation is used to illustrate how I conceive theoretical connections growing out of, through, or even into each other. Drawing up these crystalizations has revealed how new connections can be seen through different lenses, and from different viewpoints and angles. Illuminating and highlighting certain facets, can bring forward specific views and cast shadow on interconnecting dimensions, or perhaps, reveal new joints and interesting intersections.

Versions of this illustration follows throughout the following chapters, and is meant as a visual guide to assist in "seeing" the areas I attempt to draw together. It further shows how design and research, and research and design can work through each other (Markussen, 2017).

My goal for this chapter is to arrive at a view that points towards the potentials of seeing Service Design in a contemporary cultural light by creating pathways between literature and concepts from Service Design, Design and Popular Cultural theory. My goal is not to provide an exhaustive survey or history of Service Design or the development of its core theory, as this is eloquently elaborated and discussed by numerous prominent Service Design scholars (see e.g. Holmlid, 2007; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2014, 2017; Vink, 2019; Wetter-Edman, 2011). Neither is it an attempt to look upon Service Design from a cultural studies perspective. Rather my aim is to draw up a framework from within the field, having the potential for making connections with cultural domains.

2.2 On the field of Service Design

2.2.1 An evolving field

Service Design is a relatively young, yet rapidly evolving, field within the larger domain of Design (Blomkvist et al. 2010; Clatworthy, 2013; Meroni & Sangirorgi, 2011). Service Design is seen as a design-driven, human-centered and creative approach to service innovation, supported by methods and tools that assist the service designer in shaping new service solutions (Blomkvist et al. 2010, Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). Holmlid & Evenson (2008) describe Service Design as the systematic application of design methods and principles to the design of services. Mager & Sung (2011, p. 1) describe the aims of Service Design as designing services that are "useful, usable and desirable from the user perspective, and efficient, effective and different from the provider perspective."

Although the term 'Service Design' was first used within a marketing and management perspective by Lynn Shostack in 1982, Service Design was introduced as a design discipline in the early 1990s by professors Mager and Erlhoff at Köln International School of Design (Moritz, 2005). As a discipline Service Design shares similarities with intersecting design domains, such as Interaction- and Product design, including the focus on usability and experience (Holmlid, 2007; Clatworthy, 2013). Service Design practice similarly builds upon methods and approaches from these interconnecting
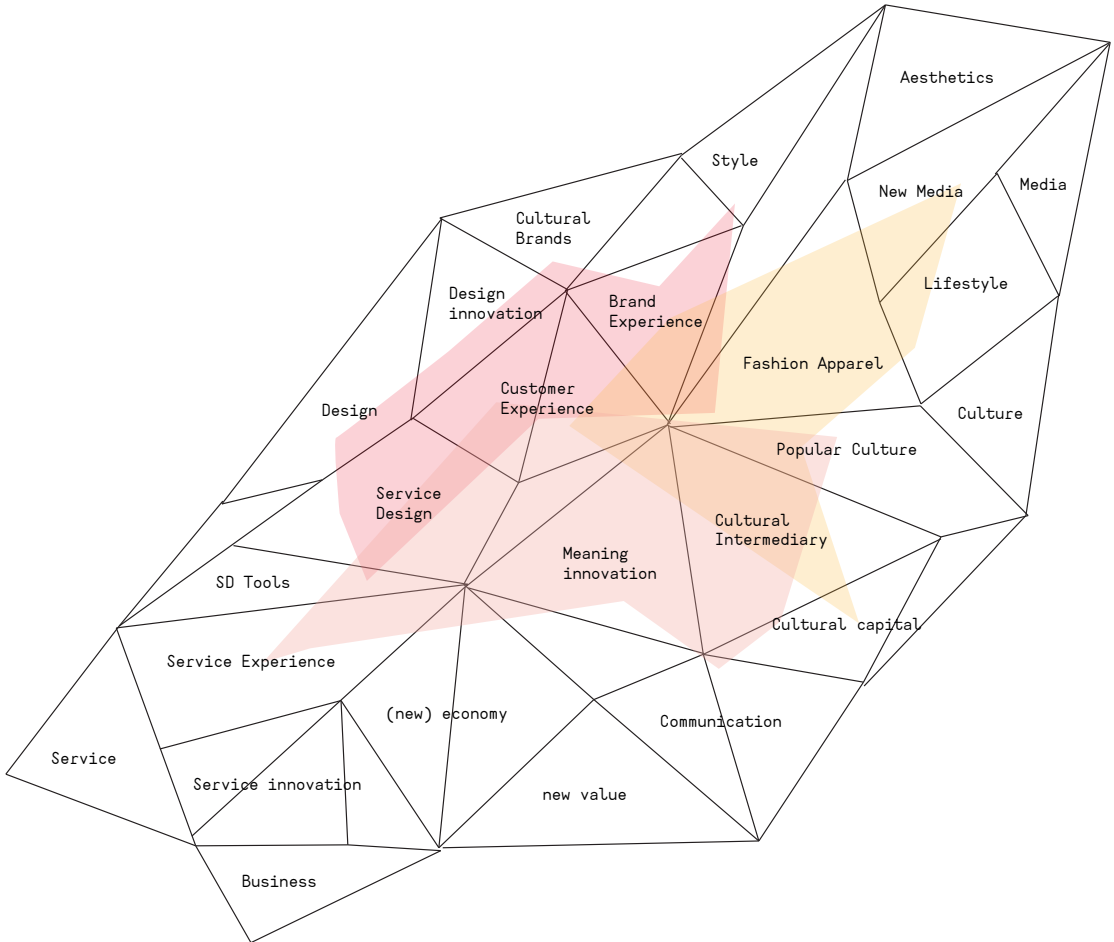
Figure 2.1 – A mapping of the research landscape that has helped frame the basis of my inquiry.
Together the highlighted areas outline the literature review in this chapter.

design fields, including human-centered approaches (Manzini, 2011), design thinking (Clatworthy, 2013) and The Double Diamond design process (Design Council, 2005).

Over the past three decades Service Design has asserted itself within the design community, with a growing body of knowledge finding its way into design education, institutions and agencies. Yet, it is still seen as "a design domain in the process of finding, defining and redefining itself as a field of design" (Clatworthy (2013, p.16). Marc Stickdorn quite accurately points out "If you would ask ten people what Service Design is, you would end up with eleven different answers – at least" (Stickdorn, 2011, p.28).

In my research I concur with the description by Holmlid and Evenson (2008), and Mager and Sun (2011) of Service Design as the application of design methods and principles to design for services that are useful, usable, desirable, efficient, effective and different. This view frames Service Design in a design perspective. However, Stickdorn's quote above regarding the manifold perceptions and definitions of Service Design, illustrates the existing multifaceted and diverse views of the field. In her article *Designing for service as one way of designing services*, Kimbell (2011, p. 41) observes how "accounts of service design vary from those that see it as a new field of design to those that stress its origins in other disciplines and make references to existing approaches within design, management and the social sciences.". Kimbell emphasises a gap between design and service literatures, and a lack of design theory within a marketing service view, which she further notes, creates tensions in concepts of how design and service are understood.

Throughout this chapter I intend to show that although Service Design is seen to emerge from other Design disciplines, and has developed its own methods and incorporated approaches from management and marketing, it is a field that is still evolving (Clatworthy, 2013).

2.2.2 Designing for the complex nature of services

Services can be defined as deeds, performances and processes provided or co-produced by one entity or person for and with another entity or person (Zeithaml et al., 2009). Services have been described as offerings in themselves (e.g. public transport), services built to support the core product of an organization (e.g. customer support), and services as manufactured add-ons to products (e.g. telecom) (Zeithaml et al., 2009). Digital services are also increasingly occupying new consumer spaces providing access

through multiple devices (Leimeister et al., 2014). Edvardsson et al. (2005) portray *service* as a perspective on value-creation with focus on customer centered value rather than *services* as market actors. The authors pose that value is contextually determined by the customer's perspective of the service experience. Hence, customer value is shaped in use - through processes and interactions with, and the experience of, the service encounters and its physical evidence (Edvardsson et al., 2005; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Zeithaml et al., 2009). I return to this notion of value co-creation and exchange later in this chapter. What I would like to highlight here is that services are complex of nature with manifold interrelations of physical, digital and human aspects which bears significance when designing for services.

Within Service Design services are described as compound and relational entities that include human and non-human factors, tangible and intangible interactions, as well as digital and physical units (Clatworthy, 2013; Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). A significant body of Service Design literature has been centered on the understanding of how to design for such complexity by developing approaches and tools to organize complex and relational service constructs and to assist in a holistic understanding of these systems and factors (e.g. Kimbell, 2011; Mager & Sung, 2008). Consequently service design has developed its own methods, within the broader design approach.

Miettinen et al. (2012) point out how service design utilizes different design methods, design research, design thinking and various visualization techniques to assist in making the intangibility of services more tangible. Such design methods and techniques assist in the deconstruction of service systems into parts that can support the designer in the design of innovative service solutions, to develop holistic, user-centric service experiences and to communicate with other designers, and non-designers during the design process (e.g. Clatworthy, 2011; Kimbell, 2011; Sangiorgi, 2014).

2.2.3 "Service Design doing"

Over the course of Service Design's growth, the field has adopted and implemented approaches, tools and methods to support the development and innovation of services (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2018). Blomkvist and Bode (2012) elaborate how "designers need to capture both physical and immaterial qualities in service representations to understand service experiences". Service Design methods and tools assist in this understanding by, for example, facilitating for creativity, visual thinking, co-design and empathy with the user (Miettinen et al., 2012). The array and extensive use of such

methods and tools are reflected through the Service Design online tool repository servicedesigntools.org (Tassi, 2009) and the number of tools presented in key reference books, such as *This is Service Design Doing* (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

In a practice-oriented view, it is the service designer's creative process of input and idea generation that contributes to the design of innovative service concepts and solutions through the use of design specific skills (e.g. Miettinen et al., 2012). Such skills include a variety of visualization techniques that can be used, for example, to translate and communicate data and insights throughout the design process and to convey new service solutions (Segelström & Holmlid, 2009).

2.2.4 Business-originated perspectives in Service Design

Although Service Design has established itself within Design, and has developed approaches that are specific to the nature of services, it has additionally drawn on and adopted approaches from Management and Marketing (Vink, 2019). This interdisciplinarity comes across, for example, through the adoption of methods and practical tools from Marketing such as Shostack's (1982) service journey, to Edvardsson and Olsson's (1999) business perspective.

As introduced in Chapter 1, Service Design is increasingly gaining traction from the business world. One reason may be that it has "matured from a niche design discipline to a more comprehensive and accessible way to tackle customer, business and organizational challenges" (Reason, et al., 2016, p.7). This may be due to the service designer's mentioned specific skills, such as the ability to visualize and communicate service offerings and details from a user (customer) perspective, and to envision near future service solutions shaped by service design tools and methods (Segelström, 2010).
Another reason for the traction Service Design has achieved in business may be seen in the recent development of Service Design's adoption of a Service Dominant Logic. This perspective has emerged from service marketing. Service Dominant Logic focuses upon the co-creation of value and value in use (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Kimbell, 2011; Wetter-Edman, 2009). It identifies how the perception, use, experience and evaluation of a service encounter constructs value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). From a service design business perspective, such exchanges of value through service interactions that involve multiple actors, are seen to contribute to construct new value relations (Kimbell, 2011).

The service dominant logic view has been widely taken up in Service Design research and has developed a new strand of the field, with a research focus upon designing for service (Kimbell, 2011; Wetter-Edman, 2011; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017). Kimbell (2011, p. 42) describes designing for service as "one specific way of approaching service design, combining an exploratory, constructivist approach to design, proposing and creating new kinds of value relation within a socio-material configuration involving diverse actors including people, technologies and artifacts". However, there is still a lack of service design-centered and practice-oriented perspectives that investigate how to design for such service value, and its relation to experience and meaning in the designing and uses of 'design for service'.

2.3 Service Design and customer experience

2.3.1 On customer experience

The interest from businesses is of course also largely due to the focus Service Design places on the customer experience. Clatworthy (2013, p.101) describes customer experience as "the impression left with a customer from their interactions with service offerings as presented through the touch-points of a service over a period of time". Similarly, da Motta-Filho (2017) outlines the service experience to be understood as the outcome of a series of emotional and personal experiences for the user, as a result from interactions with multiple elements created by the service provider.

Established notions within Service Design include 'touchpoints', that are described as every transaction and contact-point between service provider and the user (customer) (Clatworthy, 2011), and 'the customer service journey', a visual representation and technique that communicates the different aspects of the customer's experience of a service, over time (Segelström, 2010). Clatworthy (2013) draws on these to points out how satisfactory service experiences are due to expectations fulfilled along the service journey and through every touchpoint that collectively meet or exceed people's emotional needs and expectations. More recently, the term 'brand experience' has become linked to the customer experience in Service Design (da Motta-Filho 2017). From a marketing view, brand experiences are "conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 52), in other words, it entails the things that can be perceived and sensed during a service experience (Berry et al., 2002).

In his research da Motta-Filho (2017, p. 57) contemplates how brand experiences can be seen as "the customer's interpretation of the meanings communicated through the qualities and characteristics of any sort of brand manifestation". From a marketing and management view Berry et al. (2002) describe how the embedded meaning and value of experiential aspect such as the look and feel, the smell and sound, the tone-of-voice and staff behaviour of service encounters, all convey meaning, and contribute to creating emotional response.

Views on meaning and service experience are also extended to the emotional and value creating spheres. Pullman and Gross (2004) discuss how emotional aspects of service experiences, such as excitement, pleasure and surprise are significant in building customer loyalty and are equally important to functional aspects, such as accessibility. Zomerdijk & Voss (2010) present how the experiential and interactive constructs of services are seen as important in value creation as these create emotional, physical, intellectual or even spiritual engagement (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). This includes the physical environment, the service employees, the service delivery process, co-actors, such as fellow customers, and back-office support.

Although existing literature acknowledges the significance of enhancing and embedding meaning throughout service experiences, I find there is a lack of literature actually looking into how to design for such experiential, meaningful and emotional aspects in a Service Design view, and deeper investigation into what constitutes the meaning constructing elements of service design. Such emphasis on embedded meaning, for example through aesthetic characteristics and experiential details, from a Service Design perspective, could thus be one way forward in investigating how service design is to deliver experiential encounters that are embedded with meaning.

2.3.2 Towards meaningful experiences

This experiential focus of service design can be seen, as mentioned earlier, as a crucial factor for the field and practice gaining increased traction from the commercial business world. Delivering service experiences has been argued as key to obtaining and securing positive economic advantage in a business view (Pine et al., 1998). The concept of the experience economy (Pine et al., 1998) has been widely referenced in Service Design. It argues the need for businesses to design engaging and memorable experiences so as to create value for customers and business alike.

Pine and Gilmore describe experiences as distinct economic offerings that lie over and above products and services in terms of value creation possibility. However, in recent writing, da Motta-Filho (2017) critiques this view. He argues that it is not the experience per se that creates value, rather it is the user's perception and interpretation of the embedded meaning of the experience that does so. In this light, da Motta-Filho presents how Service Design may focus on value-creation through service interaction and use, as presented in the marketing concept of Service Dominant Logic.

As the service scape shifts, Boswijk et al. (2006) claim that there is a need to go beyond the offering of staged settings, as advocated in the experience economy view. Boswijk et al. argue for the inclusion of more personal and meaningful experiences that align with people's contemporary world views and that reflect current sociocultural conversations. From a brand perspective David Norton (2003) similarly claims that in going forward, brands need to offer experiential opportunities that create meaning and purpose in customer's lives.

Although the importance of the customer (and recently employee) experience is clearly articulated in Service Design, it seems to have emerged through the adoption of marketing approaches such as the experience economy. It is interesting to note that this view on customer experience in Service Design does not seem to have its origins or influences within the design disciplines. Furthermore, there is a lack of reflection within Service Design research publications as to how underlying meaning can be embodied through service design elements and processes, or of the service designer's role in how to design, for example, for embodied meaning.

There remain connections to be made from how the experiential is included in other aspects of design inquiry and disciplines. Further, relationships to design and culture in general (Julier & Munch, 2019) and the roles of design in daily life (du Gay et al., 2013) also offer potentially rich resources for Service Design and the shaping of customer experience.

2.3.3 Towards the expressive in Service Design methods

The focus upon the customer experience as part of Service Design has been accompanied by an increasing development of Service Design methods that include aspects of experience. This has primarily focused on the service journey and touchpoints. The service journey is a practical Service Design tool for mapping touchpoints over a timeline to provide "a vivid,

but structured visualization of a service user's experience" (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012, p.158). This visualisation technique also creates an overview of the different aspects and stages (such as before, during and after the service encounter) of the customer's (user) experience of a service (Segelström, 2010).

Many Service Design tools and visualization techniques, such as the service journey or the representation of touchpoints, have developed from a functional and process-oriented level (e.g. Shostack, 1982), where the focus was on identifying the points of contact between the customer and the service during a service encounter. The formal and technical approach and expression of these tools and techniques did not originally focus upon the experience of using the service, nor was the focus upon the design of experiential services.

However, there are newer contributions to the development of the user experience as part of Service Design through the design of creative tools and methods for innovation in practice and for research, coming from service design practitioners and designer-researchers. I will briefly present two examples of these recent developments.

The first of these concerns the design of tangible tools for collaborative and co-design processes (Figure 2.2). Karianne Rygh (2018, p. 456) reports on the design of tangible and aesthetic tools to support cross-disciplinary co-design processes and enable collective sense making, by establishing "a shared 'language' through physical form". Through references to the affordances and metaphors that are embedded and embodied in such design tools, these physical objects enable communication and interaction. The aesthetic and physical characteristics of the tools, such as shape, size, colour and tactility are considerately designed by the designer-researcher to fit the context, scope and topic (Rygh, 2018). Rygh mainly operates within the context of healthcare, yet her work illustrates the opportunities for Service Design tools that are intuitive, communicative, and embedded with meaning.

The second example is Matthews' (2016) experiential tool, Graphic Experiential Evidencing (GEE). Matthews describes how this tool draws on the graphic novel as inspiration for visualization techniques that provide details for the narrative of the experience and desired emotional response of key service encounters involving touchpoints (Figure 2.3). Matthews further proposes that GEE offers an expressive way to communicate within multidisciplinary teams, and to non-designer stakeholders. This shows that there is value in the development of visually rich approaches, tools and
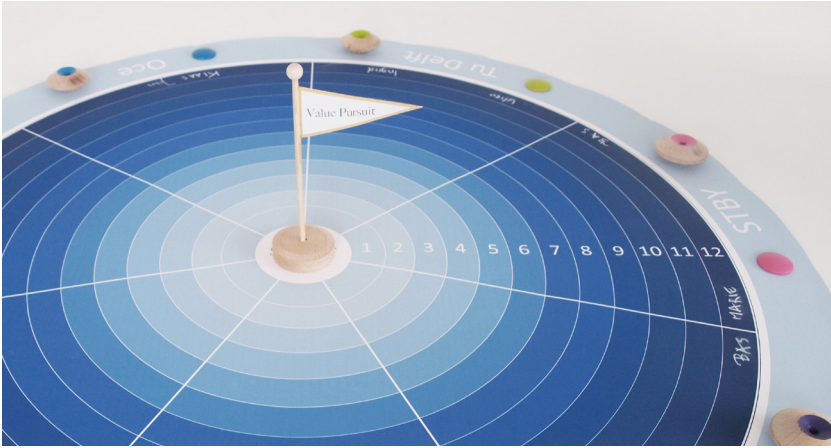
Figure 2.2 – Example of an experiential tangible tool. 'Value Pursuit' is used to facilitate cross-disciplinary conversations and collaboration in public services. The aesthetic characteristics and intrinsic meaning of the tool prompts more intuitive use. Source: Karianne Rygh

Figure 2.3 – Example of an experiential graphic tool. The GEE tool is inspired by the expression of the graphic novel to offer an emotional response, and to accentuate the experience. Source: Ted Matthews and Syver Lauritzen.

methods when designing for service meaning, in order to evoke more emotive and intuitive responses that are suited for designing experiential services.

These examples highlight the need to explore how service design approaches, tools or methods can take on more conceptual and creative attributes and features to stimulate the design for experiential and meaningful services. When reviewing different service design tools, though, there clearly seems to be a lack of formalized approaches that relate to the design for services that are attuned to the dynamic shifts that take place in the negotiation of cultural meaning and value. There is a need for practical means to assist the service designer in encapsulating and conceptualizing the cultural and experiential in the design of new services with a focus on customer experiences that are in line with contemporary cultural contexts.

2.3.4 Materials of Service Design

Another recent development within the field centres on discussion about, and identification of, the objects and materials of Service Design. Secomandi and Snelders (2011, p. 33) take up how the understanding and definition of the objects of Service Design can clarify in what way these 'materials' can be used as components for innovation. They suggest service interfaces as a service design material object as it "brings services into being", as these interfaces actualize the interaction between customer and service provider. The authors further suggest that the actual design of the interface is the design of the service, and by understanding how to design such interfaces, new solutions can be created.

Blomkvist, Clatworthy and Holmlid (2016) note how materials in design are used to explore problems, and to model and communicate the semantic characteristics of a design solution. Such materials are often considered as "something that is physically formed as part of the design and production process." This is based upon Donald Schön's (1983, p.78) view of designing as "a conversation with the materials of the situation" .

Blomkvist et al. (2016, p. 2) further consider how interaction design has identified non-physical materials, such as software (Blevis et al., 2006) or "the social" (Gaver, 1996), and suggest how "service designers use materializations of immaterial aspects of service during the design process as tangible representations" through metaphors, abstractions, stories and visualizations. The authors explore this traversing between "the physical, manifested tangible and intangible" and the "immaterial, emotional and

procedural" in their exploration of service materials. Understanding the materials of service design is significant, because as they are defined, it can make it clearer in what way these materials could be used as components for innovation (Clatworthy, 2011)

Based on Shostack's (1982) marketing view of service evidence, as every contact point where the customer experiences a service, one important contribution to the discussion of service design materials is Clatworthy's work that identifies touchpoints as one of Service Design's most central materials (Clatworthy, 2011, 2013). The ways touchpoints are modeled and assembled over time affect the user's holistic service experience, and can be used as means for exploring and stimulating innovative service solutions (Clatworthy, 2008; Secomandi & Snelders, 2011).

In 2011, Clatworthy called for further work to explore alternative and richer touchpoint representations to gain a deeper understanding of their individual characteristics and how they contribute to shape the customer experience (Clatworthy 2011). Matthews (2017) answers this by suggesting how touchpoints may be redefined as non-physical interactions or cultural "material", such as rituals or myths. In Matthews view touchpoints are more concerned with "the tonality of intended emotion and meaning and not just their physical and functional forms" (p. 90). However, I find no larger discussion of the characteristics of touchpoints in a cultural context. As, for example, new social media platforms appear, niche networks arise and innovative service concepts emerge, new touchpoints are also surfacing.

In conclusion, Blomkvist et al. (2016) suggest the need for further identification and discussion of the materials of Service Design to develop a vocabulary and discourse around materials that go beyond design outcomes, such as touchpoints. I find it interesting to look further into how the identification of new service design materials can stimulate new service solutions. The review of literature suggests there is room for developing further cultural material within Service Design.

2.4 Towards a cultural view of Service Design

2.4.1 The dynamic nature of design

As previously mentioned, Service Design has relationships to the fields of Product Design and Interaction Design. In both of these fields, Design is described as combining aesthetics, function and materials (Löwgren &

Stolterman, 2005; Hekkert, 2006; Holmlid, 2007). In contemporary design we see an increase in transdisciplinary connections across fields. Design is informed by an awareness of current critical debates and part of a cultural dialogue (QAA, 2008), whether in social innovation such as in the work of Manzini (2011, 2013), or in evolving dialogues between brand, design, media and customers (Dessart et al., 2015). In areas such as within fashion retail, this can be seen, for example, in the developing cross sections across social media to brand communities, through omni-channeled retail experiences, or by way of mediated communication between design and consumer lifestyles (Dessart et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Design is acknowledged as an activity of creative imagining, construction, consumption and cultural circulation (Julier, 2000). It is dependent on a flexibility of ideas that are realised in acts of making and use, together with methodologies informed by an awareness of sociocultural contexts and conversations, and responses to them. Design can range between the expressive and the functional and can, for example, be stylistically driven or socially motivated or mediated (QAA, 2008). Designing works through iterative and reflexive processes informed by evaluation and modification (Nelson & Stolterman, 2003). Design artifacts, processes, interactions and services are reliant upon the evolving dialogue and negotiation between the designer and the client, manufacturer, audience, user, customer, participant or recipient (QAA, 2008).

Since Service Design has strong relations to the place and emergence of other fields of Design, as accounted for at the beginning of this chapter, including the role of Interaction Design as being about more than technical functionalism (e.g. Löwgren, 2007), I had expected such characteristics to also appear in the literature on and originating from Service Design itself. A number of questions come to mind. I inquire further into the extent to which Service Design can be described as having an awareness of current critical debates, and developing and supporting related engaging services. What sorts of cultural intersections might Service Design have with aspects of the daily lives and lifestyles of consumers in their experiences of services that are cultural and not only transactional? How, too, might design expertise and practitioner insights into relations of services to cultural aspects of design be included in the ongoing development of Service Design? Might we consider service design itself as having an as yet rather under designed cultural role, and as being a partner in other forms of a cultural dialogue in which design participates? In the next sections I take up these matters in more detail.

2.4.2 Design and culture

In this section I discuss to what extent Service Design has embraced cultural and stylistic aspects of Design. I also explore the extent to which Service Design can be described as a creatively and culturally informed field (Clatworthy, 2011). To do this, I will step back a level and describe the discourse within Design regarding design and culture. In the following section I therefore explore the relation that Design, as a broad discipline, has with culture, and use this to make a comparison with existing research in Service Design.

Design and its influential interplay with culture is a developed research topic. From within Design, Julier's (2000, p. 3) work exploring the culture of design and design cultures, looks into how "networks of interaction between design, production and consumption" shape cultural meaning. From interconnecting fields such as cultural studies, significant work includes that of du Gay et al. (2013) in which they discuss the designer's role in shaping both commercial and symbolic value through the designs they create.

"To be a designer is a cultural option: designers create culture, create experiences and meaning for people." (Press & Cooper, 2003, p. 6). This quotation points to the crucial role design and designers play in shaping cultural meaning and value. To design products that are perceived as meaningful, "designers have to *embody* culture in the things they design" (du Gay et al, 2013, p. 56). These views frame the designer as a translator and communicator of cultural meaning.

'Culture' is a term and concept widely used in Design discourse. However, it is a term with a vast array of interpretations and connotations. Stuart Hall (1996) presents culture as a set of shared practices, values, representations, languages and customs of a given society. du Gay et al. (1998, 2013) sum up a view on culture as 'the production of and circulation of meaning'. These views emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as part of a wider change in earlier distinctions between high and low culture, relating to the changing nature of class and privilege in Western Europe, as well as the emergence of consumer culture and design's presence in everyday life beyond earlier modernist, industrial design views and practices (e.g. du Gay et al., 2013).

The renowned British cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1989) introduced a manifold view on culture. In this he, amongst other things, envisaged culture as concerned with the traditional - the ordinary and common

meanings as a 'whole way of life'. On another side, Williams saw culture as to do with the creative - the individual meanings, arts and learning. In a broad sense, culture entails the notion of shared meanings and values that are communicated through signifying texts and practices. From a design perspective, Press and Cooper (2003, p.13) broadly define culture as "distinctive patterns of social life that reflect shared values, meanings and beliefs expressed in preferred material objects, services and activities". Although the authors' view includes a notion of the cultural influence of services, this is yet to be investigated more elaborately from within a Service Design perspective.

Press and Cooper's definition further highlights the interplay between cultural meaning and value, and products. Culture has great influence on the design of products, and these designed products play a significant role in shaping our contemporary culture (du Gay et al., 1998). Today, the design of consumer and lifestyle-focused products are no longer the result of mere functional or technical improvements. When talking about fashion-, graphic- or product design today, for example, designed products are just as well described in terms such as symbolic, emotional, cultural and meaningful (e.g. Hekkert, 2006; Norman, 2003; Press & Cooper, 2003).

Press and Cooper (2003) further discuss how the designer interprets and translates influences from culture, to actively design for the conveyance of intrinsic meaning through the designed artefact. By using her creative design skills and sociocultural knowledge, the designer enables meaning through the objects she designs. The authors assert how culture frames the meanings of products, often reflected in their form and function. They further note how culture also provides the rituals attached to the way we use products. This view further embraces the active role of the designer in framing and communicating cultural meaning through design.

2.4.3 Designing for cultural meaning and value

du Gay et al. (2013) discuss how meaning is constructed and represented in an on-going process between design and culture. The designer designs products that are functional, but also endowed with meaning through their symbolic significance. Meaning is generated through the communication, representation and interpretation of signs, mainly those of language, including visual 'language' such as images, representations, signs and symbols (Barker & Jane, 2016; du Gay et al., 2013). Since the early work of Hall (1980) research into culture matured into the field of Cultural Studies whose main

concerns have come to include the study of meaning production through signifying cultural practices, the modes of which meaning is produced and represented and "the generation of meaning through images, sounds, objects (such as clothes) and activities (like dance and sport)" (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 13). From a Cultural Studies view, meaning is constructed through people's interpretation of cultural signifiers, and through social practices.

Such meaning construction and value creation has been taken up in design related discourse, such as within brand focused literature and in fashion studies, where it is argued that intrinsic meaning can be conveyed through the semantic and aesthetic qualities of designed artefacts e.g. through the translation of brand values (Holt, 2004; Karjalainen, 2004), or through style and aesthetics (Hebdige, 1979; Postrel, 2004). In this semantic view, the designed object itself is regarded a vessel of value, carrying a reservoir of vast meanings (Crane, 2012). In 2006 Krippendorff suggested a turn towards meaning in design, in a view of product semantics, in which he elaborated how "products become meaningful through symbol creation and interpretation" (p. 20).

In a less structuralist aspect on meaning making, Karjalainen (2004) has developed a semantic view of translation in design. This is one that suggests how the designer interprets intangible "material" such as brand values, and translates these into signifying elements of design, such as through shape, material, texture or colour. In this view, and as I cover in more detail below, the designed object becomes a carrier of intrinsic meaning, through its design and brand characteristics. This moves design from being merely functional and utilitarian to becoming desirable, meaningful and communicative (Julier, 2000; Karjalainen, 2004; Krippendorff, 2005).

This shift towards the meaningful has had major influence in the product design world, sparking a "new" generation of designed objects through which meaning has been redefined and reframed. One example of such was seen in the early 2000s with the playful, emotional and stylistic products from the design-focused Italian kitchenware company Alessi (Verganti, 2009). Julier (2000) uses the example of the three-legged Juicy Salif lemon squeezer by Phillip Stark for Alessi as an example to show how the form and aesthetics of the product conveys intrinsic meaning. Julier further notes how this meaning is constructed and represented in an on-going process between design, culture and use, where the object moves from being one of utility, stowed away in the kitchen cupboard, to one of contemplation and admiration to be displayed in the living room.

The designer, in contributing to this move, becomes a translator of cultural meaning, or "a maker of culture; a cultural intermediary", as Press and Cooper present (2003, p. 6). The notion of the cultural intermediary was put forward by Bourdieu (1984, 1996) within a sociological frame to conceptualize the rise of a middle class as conveyors of 'taste' and the mediation of production and consumption. Later this was extended to mediating between economy and culture (e.g. Muniese et al., 2007). du Gay (2004, p. 100) took this concept in the direction of devices and dispositions, to understand what is involved in 'promoting consumption' beyond the producer or consumer, by looking into "the relational work that occurs between them", which is enabled by 'devices' that contribute to form consumption practices, including design, marketing, packaging, technology and service personal.

Later, in section 2.5.5, I return to the notion of the cultural intermediary. For now, I will stay with the construction and representation of cultural meaning as an on-going process between design and culture (du Gay et al. 2013); between products, use and people (Julier et al., 2019).

2.4.4 The dynamic interplay of service experience, design and culture

In a recent contribution to the area of design and culture Julier and Munch (2019, p. 4) assert how "Design, these days, also includes the orchestration of networks of multiple things, people and actions". The authors discuss how design culture, and design cultures are shaped by participations and engagement of people, and the public, and how design culture involves the entanglement of social practices and material constituents. "Systems that bring products and services together, such as cycle sharing schemes or smartphones, require complex interweaving of material and immaterial artefacts" (Julier & Munch, 2019, p. 4).

Service experiences and encounters today reflect such a dynamic interweaving of material and immaterial artefacts and networks between 'things, people and actions' (Kimbell, 2011). Indeed, looking back at the description of services in section 2.2.2, services are complex entities and systems that include human and non-human factors, interactions, products, and actors. The core of Service Design is designing for such interwoven networks of the physical and digital, the material and immaterial, of interactions between technology, physical locality and different people, including service staff, users and consumers that influences culture. I contemplate how then Service Design is not actively contributing to, or participating in such dialogues of culture and design?

As we look to the changing nature of services, we can see these as contextual, dynamic and shifting entities, that exist between the digital and physical, the personal and public, and that communicate and mediate consumption and use (Clatworthy, 2013; Dennington, 2018; Matthews, 2015). Staying in the realms of fashion and apparel, brands are offering cross platform shopping experiences, in a new space of multiple digital and physical touch-points and platforms following the fast shifting pace of new economic models, new technologies and new media. New technologies are influencing the service experience (Sandström et al., 2008), one example being AI bots overtaking service personnel functions, such as online customer service conversations (Luce, 2019). New business models are shaping systems and networks that enable users to become co-producers and active participants in making cultural artefacts that shape new practices, such as Etsy, an online marketplace for handcrafts (Kacadias & Loch, 2016). Social media platforms are shaping new ways to consume, communicate and share, with blurring boundaries between private and public, commercial and personal (Dessart et al., 2015). This shows the "plurality of the technologies of consumption and the manner in which these operate" that enable consumption, and shape new practices (du Gay, 2004, p. 100).

The dynamic interplay of design and culture "takes us from linear flows of meaning to complex, multi-linear ecologies that involve ongoing interactions between design and its human and other participants" (Julier & Munch, p. 5). This brings up questions I find intriguing, such as how can Service Design establish closer connections to cultural concepts by investigating, for example, the networks and cycles of meaning construction in service design? And what possibilities lay in investigating the service designer's semantic transformation of meaning into the design of novel service offerings and experiences, and as such how does the service designer contribute to such circulation of meaning?

The service designer too uses her creative design skills and cultural knowledge to design for new services. However, in Service Design there is little discussion or direction regarding how the service designer translates cultural meaning, or how the characteristics of the designed services communicate meaning. Further there is a lack of discussion of the embedded meaning that may come into play through the use of services. These are elements I take up in this thesis and elaborate in detail in Chapter 4.

2.5 Service Design and innovation of meaning

2.5.1 Design-driven innovation

In Product Design the identification and construction of meaning is seen as a key factor for innovation. Verganti (2009) introduces the term meaning-innovation to describe a design-driven view of innovation. In this, he proposes how shifting the meaning; the emotional and symbolic constructs of products is what drives success on the market, rather than merely following a user-centered perspective. In this lies a focus on how innovation driven by design can be seen as the innovation of product meanings. Such product meanings can convey experiential, emotional and socio-cultural values, that make sense to users within their sociocultural context (Öberg & Verganti, 2014; Verganti, 2008).

This move from the functional and technical towards the meaningful and desirable has become paramount in lifestyle-oriented and popular cultural domains such as within fashion. In fashion, meaning is conveyed through the stylistic and aesthetic characteristics of the physical clothing, but also through intangible values such as brand image (Crane, 2012; Holt, 2004). These objects – such as fashion clothing, reflect certain values, attitudes, behaviours and shifting identities, and convey intrinsic and symbolic meaning through aesthetic and stylistic qualities (Breward, 2003; Crane, 2012; Hebdige, 1979). However, not only are the material products themselves seen to convey meaning, but also the use of the products; the symbolic practices, that are interlaced with the product (Fletcher, 2008). Additional layers of meaning come into play, for example through the way the clothing items are assembled, as this communicates a certain style that further conveys a new layer of meaning (Kaiser, 2012).

2.5.2 Designers' semantic translation into meaning

Peirce's (1955) theory of signs, or semiotics, has been taken up in design studies and education to understand how meaning is signified and interpreted through the semantic characteristics of designed artefacts (Krippendorff & Butter, 1984). As mentioned earlier, Krippendorff (2006, p. 20, p. 3) claims that products become meaningful "through symbol creation and interpretation", and that through designing artefacts embedded with meaning through their semantic characteristics the practice of design is taking a semantic turn, "a turn towards consideration of meaning".

This 'semantic turn' in product design, has been taken further in relation to brand values and meaning making. Karjalainen (2004) introduces the notion of Semantic Transformation in Design, through which he explores and describes how the designer can translate brand values into meaning conveyed through the form of tangible objects. Karjalainen (2004) explores how such meaning can be constructed through the designer's semantic translation of intangible brand values into physical products and their aesthetic characteristics. By identifying how certain semantic aspects convey specific meanings connected to a brand's values, Karjalainen further promotes how the designer can operationalize these values to design products that are seen to relate to each other design-wise. This contributes to shape a holistic brand experience through products that incorporate similar design characteristics.

With the semantic transformation, Karjalainen (2004) introduced how brand values could be transformed into products by way of design, and how this contributes to frame meaning for the user. In this semantic view on brands, a product not only operates at a functional and material level, but also acquires intrinsic meaning through its embedded brand values, operating also on an associational and emotional level. Such semantic transformation of brand strategy and values is further taken up in a service view by Clatworthy (2009) and da Motta-Filho (2012), where the authors look into the translation and communication of brand values through experiential details of service design. This is discussed more in the following section. However, the authors do not focus on or take into account the cultural position of the brand itself.

In a marketing view, brands themselves are presented as cultural mediators, as cultural influencers and translators of cultural phenomena (Holt, 2004). Brands can be seen as an assemblage of functional and emotional values that enable promises to customers (De Chernatony, 2010), while branded goods are described as "experiential commodities" that evoke sensory and emotional experiences (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 35). Holt (2004, p. 3) describes how a brand consists of markers, such as a name, logo and packaging, however, a brand does not 'become' until these markers are "filled with customer experiences". He notes how the cultural status of brands increasingly have cultural significance and influence, and that brands are also seen to act as "vessels of self expression, as the brands are "imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in constructing their identities". These notions of cultural brands that evoke emotional resonance and contribute in shaping identities, could have relevance in the design for services within contexts of lifestyle brands.

2.5.3 Semantic transformation in Service Design

In terms of brand experience, Clatworthy (2009) introduces the notion of a semantic transformation process, in the innovation phase of New Service Development. To account for the transition from brand strategy to service experience, Clatworthy (2009) illustrates how a brand's core values are amplified through the service personality, which again are transformed into service specific details, such as behaviours, tone-of-voice and touch-points. He further notes how these touch-points need to be aligned to the brand identity, as they are seen as the main carriers and communicators of brand meaning. da Motta-Filho (2017) further builds upon this notion of a semantic translation in a Service Design view, and suggests a translation and operationalization of brand values into service experiences. To assist in this transition da Motta-Filho suggests a translation of the brand into an experience proposition, and further into the service manifestations. This approach links Branding and Service Design "ensuring that the new offerings are developed under the brand and business strategies" (p. 137), and assists in the design of services that are perceived as holistic, brand aligned and experientially consistent.

Matthews (2017), picks up on Clatworthy's and da Motta-Fihlo's work, and investigates the operationalization of sacred theory as a material for meaning centered service innovation. Matthews develops a method for integrating sacred cultural and symbolic elements to lift the meaningful and emotional into service experiences. By overlapping the service myth with the brand the service experience is perceived as consistent and embedded with meaning (Matthews, 2017).

Matthew's view entails the notion that cultural or symbolic "material" can be used to shape and influence service design. If there is indeed a move towards cultural alignment of services, I believe that there is a need to explore additional meaning-constructing cultural influences to service innovation through alternative "immaterial" materials. In light of the examples in chapter 1, of services that seem both located in, and influenced by contemporary culture, and that exist between consumption and popular use, I further look into the areas of design, consumption and popular cultural meaning.

2.5.4 Design, consumption, lifestyle and popular cultural meaning

Popular culture has come to be understood as the expression and circulation of shared popular meanings, texts and practices (Barker & Jane, 2016), where

meaning construction is interlinked to lifestyle choices and consumption. Storey (2018) notes how we use and interact with the material forms of popular culture, such as books, iPhones, clothes and restaurants to communicate aspects of our identity. He considers how "popular culture is not just people acting and interacting, it is people acting and interacting with material objects and material objects interacting with each other" (Storey, 2018, p. 238).

This interplay between such popular materials and how we use and interact with them, shines light upon popular culture's connection to consumerism and consumer culture, including areas such as food and fashion (Storey, 2018). Peter Braham (2012, p. 121) expresses how fashion is a "matter of creation, consumption and identity", yet also of "production, distribution and retailing". He places the material objects and cultural practices of fashion between popular culture and cultural economy. The choices of certain fashion objects or style are in addition means through which people communicate the values, hopes and beliefs of the social groups they belong (Barnard, 2002).

Julier (2000, p. 48) brings up connections between contemporary consumer culture and design, as he presents the moments of consumption "from the act and experience of acquiring, owning, using – to looking, listening, smelling – or consumption of time, as in leisure activities - as wider sets of cultural and ideological systems". However, although closely interlinked with consumerism, it is argued that popular audiences (users) create their own meanings through how they use popular cultural material and products, as active co-producers, not as mere passive consumers (Barker & Jane, 2016). People use, display and frame the designed products in a wider global branded fashion and mediatized lifestyle context, to denote and convey intrinsic meaning.

Furthermore, popular culture is not only seen in relation to the consumption of physical products and goods, but also as consumption of creative expressions, such as music, arts and media (Storey, 2018).

> Popular culture is never just the materiality of things; it is always a simultaneous entanglement of meaning, materiality, and social practice. This admixture can take various forms: a text message written on an iPhone, musical sounds produced by the human body, graffiti painted on a wall, a toy loved by a child (Storey, 2016, p. 17).

Brands too, have a significant place in popular culture. From a media perspective Arvidsson (2006, p. 4) discusses how "brands have become part of a global popular culture", as these are also inherently tied into popular and lifestyle culture as a means for "producing the self and social connectedness", and are viewed as identity constructing and community shaping. Cultural brands have become key actors in popular culture, connecting to, and being taken up into creative areas of media, music and art (Turner, 2015), enabling co-production of experiences between brand, consumer goods and popular cultural creative expressions and experiences. Arvidsson (2006, p. 39) expresses that "brands not so much provide ready made experiences, as much as they enable the production, or co-creation, of an experience, or, for that matter, more enduring forms of immaterial use-values, like identity and community". He further notes how brands rely on the co-production of value with the consumer.

Featherstone (1989, p. 59) addresses the topic of consumer culture and 'lifestyle'. He notes how the "assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily disposition" is carefully interwoven into a lifestyle, where "individuality, self-expression and a stylistic self-consciousness" surface. Many of our lifestyle constructs today are intertwined with a service, in some form. From online clothes shopping through personalized and branded digital services, to novel transport services that enable new mobility practices, such as car-sharing or electric scooter hire. Services are also increasingly connecting to, and being communicated through, popular social media platforms. Such social media platforms contribute to the circulation of cultural codes and values through capturing and calibrating attention (Carah & Shaul, 2015).

Staying within the area of fashion and clothing, as an example, the image-sharing platform Instagram is a social media platform that is "revolutionizing the fashion industry worldwide, as interest toward new trends, designers and products increasingly unfold online" (Park et al., 2016, p. 64). Instagram is playing a key role in enabling the mediation and sharing of popular cultural materials and practices in a mix of products, practices, contexts and uses. Brands have also become occupiers of this creative and visual space by using the platform to communicate and engage with consumers, to create and circulate images of lifestyles and cultural practices (Carah & Shaul, 2015).

Given such developments, it may be timely to ask what may be implied and lie ahead for the field of Service Design and its practices as we go forward into ways Service Design may be connected to and across other domain areas

of design, as well as emerging new technologies and related communicative expressions and exchanges.

By looking towards popular cultural views or concepts, Service Design could draw on and shape cultural aspects in its offerings and experiences connected to lifestyle, including consumerism, identity-construction and shared meaning-making. Jensen (2007) summarizes how the concept of lifestyle is linked to practices of identity construction by way of consumption choices. This may include, for example, choice of food, choice of fashion style, genre of music one listens to, the way people choose to move around the city, where and how to travel or choices of literature and movies. Together these express and signify our identity, communicating expressions of self.

As services become more interlinked with our everyday practices and lifestyle choices, perhaps soon, if not already, popular cultural lifestyles will entail the choice of services to use, the cultural manifestation of services, and services as choices that mark them out as having cultural values, relevance, and properties?
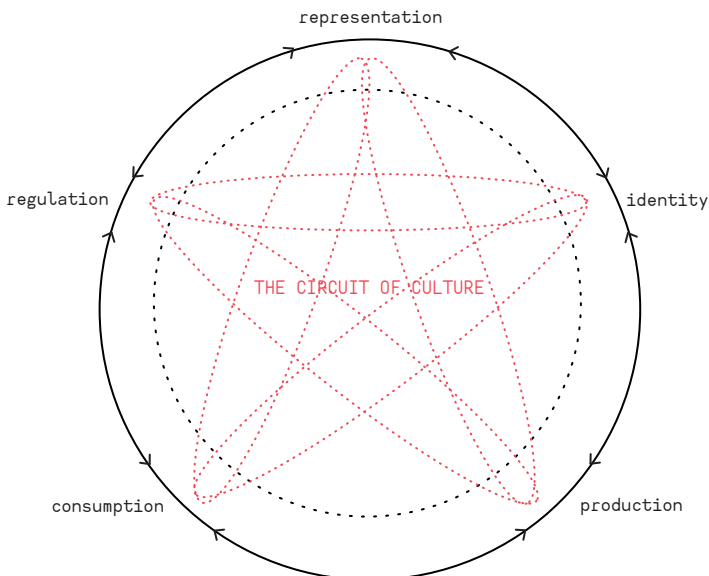
Figure 2.4 The Circuit of Culture (du Gay, 1996). Redrawn by Dennington, C. 2020.

2.5.5 The designer as a cultural intermediary

The circuit of culture (du Gay et al., 1996) is a conceptual model that illustrates the interconnecting and cultural processes of meaning making of products, through *representation*, *identity*, *production*, *consumption* and *regulation* (Figure 2.4). According to du Gay et al., a designed product is not only meaningful on its own; rather meaning is embedded and circulated through several processes, such as how it is used, advertised, mediatized, and shared. By translating cultural material into designed artefacts, the designer is seen to have a central role in this cultural circuit, as one who frames and attaches meaning to products and services, taking on a role as a cultural intermediary (Press & Cooper, 2003). For du Gay et al. (2013) this role as cultural intermediary becomes apparent in which the designer attempts to bring together two key moments, production and consumption, through 'encoding' products with certain meanings.

Cultural intermediaries can be understood as "professionals engaged in the framing, dissemination and qualification of meanings and commodities in processes of symbolic (cultural) production" (Kuipers, 2014, p. 43), and are seen to have specific expertise, qualifications and characteristics that legitimize the framing and dissemination of cultural meaning (Maguire & Matthews, 2014). Kelly (2014, p. 67) describe cultural intermediaries as "specialists in shaping symbolic goods and services". Viewed as 'tastemakers', cultural intermediaries are presented as actors that mediate between production and consumption. These individuals are mainly located in the cultural and media industries, including design professionals (Bourdieu, 1984; Maguire & Matthews, 2014). More recently, cultural intermediaries are presented as mediators between culture and economy, as they construct value by framing and legitimatizing products, services, ideas and behaviours (Maguire & Matthews, 2012). Non-human cultural intermediaries are further suggested as organizations or brands that transfer meaning (Holt, 2004; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006).

Existing debates within cultural studies also critique the concept of the cultural intermediary. Questions regarding power relations and distribution in who frames value have risen, in regards to, for example, cultural dispositions due to underlying social structures (Negus, 2002). Nixon and du Gay (2010, p. 498) critique the wide use of the term, as it "tends to cut across distinct occupational formations, cultures and forms of expertise, as well as the rather different social composition of discrete cultural intermediary occupations". They ask, rhetorically, "who needs cultural intermediaries?" – before

suggesting the potentials that lay in seeing the cultural intermediary role in opening up "links between production and consumption, and the interplay between these discreet moments in the lifecycle of cultural forms".

Maguire and Matthews (2012) contribute to the conversation by highlighting the cultural intermediaries specific and contextual expert orientation, "their explicit claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields." (p. 552). The authors propose cultural intermediaries as "contextualized market actors" differentiated by their "devices, dispositions and locations" through which they mediate (p. 553). The work of the cultural intermediary consists of constructing value "by framing how others – end consumers, as well as other market actors including other cultural intermediaries – engage with goods, affecting and effecting others' orientations towards those goods as legitimate – with 'goods' understood to include material products as well as services, ideas and behaviours" (p. 552).

Maguire and Matthews draw up three dimensions that underline the contextual work of the cultural intermediary; framing, expertise and impact. The authors note how "all cultural intermediaries are involved in framing goods" by way of their expertise and claims of authority that are reflected through subjective dispositions and specific "stocks of professional and cultural capital" at hand. The intention of the cultural intermediaries' work is to influence "others' estimation of goods as legitimate and thus lead to attachment" (p. 554).

Following such views on the cultural intermediary, I find it interesting to ask who or what the cultural intermediaries of service are, and to what extent Service Design can be described in relation to the service designer's practices as a cultural intermediary. In what ways does the service designer frame services as legitimate, and how that impacts the perception users may have, and what is the expertise and dispositions of the service designer that offer 'stocks' of professional and cultural capital?

2.5.6 Service Design and its relation to culture

I consider the cultural aspects described in the previous sections to be highly relevant for Service Design. Within the broader domain of Design, I have shown an increasing relation to popular culture and lifestyle that creates a framing for interrelations between design, brand, style, meaning and identity construction. In these domains the notion of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) plays a conspicuous role in the act of use and consumption. In a marketing

view Norton (2003) discusses cultural capital as the most valued resource customers receive from a brand experience. However, the notion of cultural capital is not discussed in detail in Service Design.

As services increasingly exist in between the digital and physical realms, how can services not only offer the construction of, but also the display of, cultural capital? As part of this, I question in what ways and to what degree this can be transferrable to Service Design. Predominant research views in Service Design do not currently seem to be very culturally oriented, and existing tools and approaches do not typically address experiential and cultural aspects informed by and linked with the large body of work in culture.

Service research addresses areas of culture and service such as the cultural and institutional dimensions of services, for example within tourism, arts institutions, and urban work cultures, and the cultural economical impact of creative services (e.g. theatres, museums, festivals) on regional growth (Ellger, 2001). From a service marketing view, Lin (2012) draws up connections between service brand and factors of consumer culture through experiential marketing, and relationships of lifestyle and consumption in meaningful service encounters at branded cafés through factors such as distinctive symbolic brand codes in branded spaces.

Lee (2012) draws attention to service design and culture by pinpointing parallels between service design and the historic development of luxury hotels. He describes how luxury hotels became institutions of social and cultural meaning through their meticulous planning of every service detail, and personalized guest experiences. He concludes, however, by questioning how service designers can facilitate for such personalized and consistent service experiences by developing new processes. Seen together, such conversations highlight service cultural connections, yet I find a lack of detailing of the meaning making mechanisms that are set in motion from a Service Design view, and the need for practical means that can assist the service designer when operating in such cultural landscape.

Looking to Service Design discourse it seems the term and concept of culture, when used, is mainly aligned with the managerial view of Service Design that Kimbell observed. Culture is mainly used in terms of business, service or organizational culture. For example, Hyde & Davies (2004) use Service Design to investigate organizational culture in a healthcare context, and frame organizational cultural development due to complex relationships and interplay between organizational design, staff and service users.

Sangiorgi (2010, p. 5) brings up the fundamental significance of building "a 'culture' of participation and involvement" for organizational transformation in public health care, to co-create internal mechanisms for change.

Edvardsson and Enquist (2002) investigate the strategic role of service culture and strategy for business development in a commercial context, by investigating the concept of service culture, influenced by corporate culture, within the global furniture brand IKEA. The authors present how "the creation of shared values and meanings," both internally among leaders and employees, and externally, towards end- users, "is part of the strategy-making process" (p. 159). They conclude how the "IKEA success story is about how the unique service culture fits together and drives the service strategy. Values and meanings are produced and reproduced over time and at different levels in the IKEA stakeholder network." (p. 180). They do not, however, draw any lines to the contemporary cultural context that IKEA exists within, which could be interesting, also in terms of influences between popular and (branded) organizational cultures.

The term and concept of culture is also present in Service Design discourse through an understanding of localized, ethnic or geographical culture. Mazzarella et al. (2018), as an example, investigate the "material culture of artisans" through cultural heritage, tied into identity, tradition and place. For Service Design, as both a field and practice, I believe these various uses of culture are equally important as a more contemporary and popular cultural view. However, I see a space of opportunity, to investigate within a business context towards innovation of 'meaningful' services, how the relations and interplay between design, popular use, and users form cultures.

In reviewing current service design literature, as also brought up in publication 1, I find there is a lack of discussions that address culture more extensively. Four of the most popular practice-oriented service design books, *This is Service Design Thinking* (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012), and later *This is Service Design Doing* (Stickdorn et al., 2018), *The Service Innovation Handbook* (Kimbell, 2014) and *Service Design for Business: A Practical Guide to Optimizing the Customer Experience* (Reason, Løvlie & Flue, 2015) do not specifically bring forward cultural concepts or frame service design as a culturally connected field.

Kimbell's book on service innovation does bring up some cultural aspects, in relation to the method of cultural probing, where objects are designed specifically to investigate certain contexts, and within organizational terms,

such as the social science concept of "audit culture" (p. 185), which entails the development of an organizational culture that strongly focuses on measurements and evaluations of performance. The chapter *Behaving and Experiencing* (p. 65 – 93) does address a section on *Behaviour and Culture* (p. 70) in which Kimbell offers a socio-cultural lens to behavior when looking into customer experiences, not to ask what people do through a behavioural lens, but rather "what it means for them and how and why that is so" (p. 71). This socio-cultural lens offers a view of how people co-create contextual meaning through looking into practices and the "dynamic mixture of elements" that shape experiences (p. 70). However, Kimbell does not go into any detailing or further investigation of such meaning making.

Leading design journals that address both design and culture such as *Design Issues*, *Design and Culture*, *International Journal of Design* as well as the service design specific *Touchpoint* Journal, have not over the past years had contributions or themes specifically regarding Service Design and contemporary culture. Looking at the main Service Design conference ServDes, there has been no popular cultural focus since the start in 2009, rather a primary focus on business, management, computer science and engineering, according to a review of metadata from the research in the first four conferences, executed by Blomkvist et al. (2016).

The 6th ServDes conference in 2018, "Proof of Concept" showed a broader cultural inclusion and cross sections such as between Social Innovation, Participatory Design and Service Design (Pierandrei et al. 2018), social media digital methods (Tassi et al., 2018), the design of convivial food systems (Ballantine-Brody, 2018), investigating the consonance and dissonance of meaning and value in design-driven and service innovation (Korper et.al, 2018), and my contribution in regards to the semantic transformation of trends in Service Design (Dennington, 2018).

Forthcoming ServDes.2020 Tensions / Paradoxes / Plurality "seeks to explore the tensions and paradoxes of negotiating traditional knowledges, cultural practices, and relational obligations in the rapidly changing global landscape." (servdes2020.org). This points to emerging discussions concerning cultural connections to Service Design.

In a more contemporary cultural framing, Matthews (2017) explores the notion of shared meaning making through the ritualistic and sacred, in areas such as travel and sports. Matthews cross pollinates concepts from sacred theory with areas of Service Design, to bring forward concepts

such as service myths, transitional journeys and service rituals, through a "process for identifying, activating, fine-tuning and orchestrating existing cultural material towards the design of sacred service experiences" (p. 93). Santamaria et al. (2015), on the other hand, explore symbolic aspects of sustainable consumption and services in lifestyle-oriented domains in the context of Product Service Systems. The authors discuss "the role of design in shifting cultural associations of value" by reframing sustainable goods as "worthy and desirable" by encoding cultural meaning through design (p. 18).

There are also limited discussions of service design and its cultural connections coming from outside the field. In sustainable fashion, Niinimäki (2013) points towards how services built around products can offer value in a sustainable context. Rissanen et al. (2018) identify the need for fashion to take a step towards Service Design to identify motivational factors for the re-use and re-design of fashion garments. Still, these are suggestive and indicative steps. They signal the need for a more elaborate investigation of how Service Design can utilize its cultural innovation and communication potential, in both practical and theoretical terms.

Seen together, I find there is a significant lack of a detailed conversation on service design and design, culture, and popular meanings coming from and within Service Design discourse. It is this that I take up in the publications included in this thesis and in this Exegesis, especially in Chapter 4.

2.6 Chapter summary

2.6.1 An expanding profession and practice?

In the opening of this chapter I presented a schematic illustration to try to map out some of the theoretical elements and their potential connections. In closing this chapter I will pull together the main points to highlight an open space for the investigation into possible relations between service design and popular cultural concepts. This is visualised in Figure 2.5 (p. 60).

The first sections of this chapter look into Service Design as an evolving field with a multidisciplinary heritage, yet embedded in the wider field of Design. Following, I outline the strong focus on methods and processes within service design to design for the complexity of services. The field's relation to the business domain, with the adoption of a service dominant logic and a focus on customer experience is brought up, and identifies a need to closer look into the experiential, the expressive and the meaningful in Service Design, and in relation to service design approaches, tools and materials.

The next section draws up perspectives on design and culture from Design and Cultural theory, centering on cultural impact and influence in Design, and the designer's role in constructing cultural meaning and value, identifying the lack of attention to such established concepts within Service Design. Design innovation is approached by way of the designer's semantic transformation of values into designed artefacts, and the adoption of this notion into Service Design. This section highlights potentials in viewing cultural material for innovation of meaning in Service Design.

The final section addresses the interplay of design, consumption and lifestyle in popular culture, connecting areas of fashion apparel, brands, and popular practices, questioning what these realms could bring to a Service Design perspective, and further, in investigating the service designer's cultural role. Finally, the concept of the cultural intermediary frames the designer as an active producer and communicator of cultural meaning, yet there is no such discussion of the intermediary roles found within Service Design.

In Chapter 1 I illuminate how novel and culturally located service concepts point toward the expanding practice of professional and culturally connected roles of services. Despite these developments, Service Design discourse does not, to any substantial sense, embody a wider contemporary cultural discussion of these phenomena and design-infused practices. In my view, it seems a paradox that new services appearing in the market seem firmly placed within contemporary culture, yet the main body of Service Design literature does not engage with, or appear to be informed by, the appearance or force of popular cultural views and people's engagement with services as culturally constructed and circulated.

In this chapter I demonstrate Service Design as a Design discipline with a clear link to Product and Interaction Design. However, one might say that Service Design seems to have emerged from these disciplines without taking on aspects of the cultural views, or as a core part of its own disciplinary emergence in a wider view on design, innovation, business, customers, consumers and publics. There is, as yet, little explicit research regarding the service designer's use of contemporary cultural material and the conveyance of meaning through service offerings, experiences and interactions. In addition to these areas being ripe for further research, there is also a need for elaboration of the notion of meaning-innovation in Service Design.

2.6.2 Towards a cultural view

I find this view of Service Design concerning a cultural approach interesting, particularly as service design has increasingly developed a focus upon the customer experience. I therefore consider it relevant to explore if and how service design might benefit from including and developing a cultural approach, particularly informed by research and public discourses and expressions in popular culture.

This chapter compared and contrasted service design with the cultural grounding from other design disciplines. It found a significant gap in Service Design discourse regarding its contemporary cultural reflexivity and a lack of discussion around how service design or the service designer, may be contributing to the construction of cultural meaning and value.

Looking into service design practice I found a shortage of methodological development in terms of tools, methods or approaches that potentially could assist the service designer in designing cultural and experiential service offerings and details, and to prompt innovation by way of the translation of cultural material.

I have further shown there is a need to explore and elaborate Service Design's cultural intermediary role through investigating the interconnected concepts of cultural meaning and value in a Service Design perspective. In the following chapter I will describe the research methodology, methods, tools and techniques I have chosen to explore these gaps.

2.5 – (p. 60). Illustrating key concepts and theories. This figure shows the framework that is 'lifted' through this chapter, and brought into the design research practice accounted for in Chapter 3. It also shows how research and design can work through each other, by using visual techniques. (Dennington, C., 2020).

Meaningful Service Experiences
The Semantic Transformation
Experiential SD Approaches
Design & Meaning
The Cultural Intermediary
The Circuit of Culture

Experience-centric SD
Meaning-Innovation
Mediated Consumption
Lifestyle & Identity

Aesthetics
Style
New Media
Media
Cultural
Brands
Design
innovation
Brand
Experience
Lifestyle
Design
Customer
Experience
Fashion Apparel
Culture
Service
Design
Popular Culture
SD Tools
Meaning
innovation
Cultural
Intermediary
Service Experience
Cultural
capital
Service
(new) economy
Communication
Service innovation
new value
Business

Chapter 3 Methodology, methods, design techniques, and practice

3.1 A practice-led, qualitative and explorative inquiry

3.1.1 Weaving between research and practice

To explore Service Design's cultural role and prospective, this thesis has taken on a practice-based, action research mode. In this a qualitative and explorative Research through Design methodology has been adopted. Through this approach, my reflective practice as a designer researcher, design practitioner and design educator has identified and contoured new knowledge in the intersection of Service Design practice and theory, Popular Cultural theory and explorative research modes. This has entailed my active participation as a designer embedded in the design process and projects, using my body of expertise accumulated through a decade of design experience and practice to acquire new insight into certain phenomena by designing for it (Löwgren & Nagai, 2008). As Vaughan (2018, p. 2) observes, "Design can open our known parameters, expose the intricacies of relationships, ask questions, posit answers and then explode them open again".

This chapter consists of two main parts. In this first part I present the research methodologies, research methods, design tools and design techniques (Morrison et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2010) that I have used throughout three explorative service design inquiries, and situated these in practice. This toggling between research and design methods and tools has assisted in the investigation of Service Design and its cultural interrelations from a design practice perspective. Further it has contributed to reveal and shape new theoretical and practical knowledge. Finally, it has illuminated the interconnecting influences and symbiosis between modes of research and design activities, methods and tools, in a culturally oriented projection of Service Design. In these processes I have needed to adopt a number of different roles (designer, educator, researcher). The chapter also reflects

on these as a key part of shaping knowledge in design that is formed by a diversity of expertise and its links and dynamics in relation to design processes and outcomes, as well as my respective roles.

The second part of this chapter draws up an account of the three explorative design inquiries from my situated practice with industry partners, in which I analytically frame, describe and reflect upon the process of a triple-semantic transformation of trends in service design. Key insights and findings from my reflective practice of designing conceptual service design artefacts, and from my observation and analysis of 17 Master's design students design processes and results, are brought forward. Furthermore, this part describes the development of an experiential service journey tool, and highlights the intermediary role of the service designer. In closing this chapter I use a case example from my design practice to illustrate the three stages of semantic transformation in which trends are translated into conceptual service design offerings and details, before offering reflections on limitations of the developed approach.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Experimental design-driven action research

The interdisciplinary features of Service Design and the open-ended and explorative nature of my inquiry has called for a methodology that can reflect multifaceted and layered potential that contains both tacit and explicit knowledge (Morrison & Sevaldson, 2010), and has taken shape through an experimental action research mode (Villari, 2015). Through design-driven inquiries with the business partners (as presented in Chapter 1), three acts of semantic transformation have been enacted to explore and probe my initial research questions. This has prompted new knowledge through the articulation, conceptualizing, making and shaping of conceptual service design artefacts (Löwgren & Nagai, 2008; Morrison et al., 2019).

The inquiries have taken shape through phases of analyzing (cultural material), interpreting (the cultural trends and meaning), designing (culturally aligned concepts) and implementing (findings into new inquiries) (Villari, 2015). Such design-driven mode of inquiry entails the tacit and embodied knowledge of the designer, and her "designerly way of knowing" (Cross, 1982, 2001). In my work this refers to the loops of problem framing, design experiments and reflective and critical insights that have affected each other, resulting in continual adjustment of further experiments (Krogh et al., 2015).

Design research often deals with what does not yet exist; products of imagination like concepts, spaces or systems (Koskinen et al., 2008). It places the designer-researcher-practitioner in a unique position with the ability to question what if? The designers ability to imagine and speculate what might be, is due to the ability of abductive reasoning (Kolko, 2010; Mainsah & Morrison, 2013; Peirce, 1955). In this sense, the designer's synthesis and sense making is regarded as well suited to embark into unknown research territory in an ongoing and dynamic process, with an unknown outcome, guided by design knowledge, personal experience, strategies and intuition, to make visible what is not yet thought (Kolko, 2010).

3.2.2 Socially and contextually constructed knowledge

In such design-driven research inquiries, design and the act of designing is regarded as a method to explore and experiment with the shaping and unveiling of new knowledge, to challenge established notions and to posit and reframe questions (Vaughan, 2017). The act of making generates new knowledge (Lury, 2018; Morrison et al., 2010). This refers to the action of the intentional design work that is done to develop a solution for improving a given situation through ideation and concept generation, synthesis, discovery and prototyping (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2017).

This places my inquiry within a Constructivist epistemology where knowledge is viewed as socially and contextually constructed and negotiated (Creswell, 2012). In discussing the constructionist stance that Crotty brings forward (1998) Feast & Melles (2010, p. 4) note how "different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon". There is no objective truth to be revealed, "rather truth and meaning is constructed out of the engagement of our minds with the world" (Feast & Melles, 2010, p. 4). Gaver (2012, p. 940) poses how "the goal of conceptual work in research through design is not to develop theories that are never wrong, it is to create theories that are sometimes right". Design research does not always provide one fixed or 'right' answer that can be tested and replicated to the same results, rather the knowledge and data that is produced is contextual and the result of specific interactions, co-created with specific people, at specific moments in time (Tarr et al., 2017). As such, the designer uses her "set of unique practical, intellectual and emotional attributes" to facilitate "the way in which the world is understood by others" (Crouch & Pearce, 2013, p. 3).

3.2.3 Research through design

My work follows practices and approaches embedded in the design practice research approach of Research though Design (RtD). This approach has roots in Frayling's (1993) account of shaping a view that sees the cognitive tradition and practice of art and design as research. Frayling drew up three categories of practice-based research: Research into (looking into a variety of historical perspectives), through making (including action research, and an account of the design experimentation done), and research for design (where the research is an end artifact, which itself embodies "the thinking").

RtD has been widely adopted in design research communities as it pursues design research on its own terms, rather than aligning to existing scientific concepts, methods, processes and approaches (Gaver, 2012). The professional skills and abilities of the designer assist in framing and reframing complex situations and play a formative role in knowledge generation (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2017). RtD sees design work and design theory as "two equally important achievements" (Markussen, 2017, p. 94).

Koskinen et al. (2008) describe how design work and research are viewed as interwoven and inseparable. "Research works through design, and design works through research" (Bærenholdt et al., 2010, p. 3). This constant movement between, and through, design work and research, resonates with how I have used my professional design practice, as well as the actual Service Design artefacts, as means to obtain and implement knowledge throughout several open-ended and experimental phases. Insights from each experiment have further been activated and implemented towards the development and design of Trendslation and its design tools, which themselves have informed the design research of the following inquiries.

Throughout the course of my research I made a slight shift from seeing the mode of research in my work from Research by Design, to Research through Design. This is apparent in my publications, where I align to the notion of Research by Design. I will try to make a brief account of this change. Research by Design is seen as a "systems approach to practice research in design", and is proposed as a research mode through a systematic alignment to "the explorative, generative and innovative aspects of design" (Sevaldson, 2010). In looking back upon design research theory, discussions and development over time, Sevaldson finds the dominating terminology of research for, into and through practice, coming from the arts, insufficient. Following the critique of e.g. Jonas (2007) that rather suggests a move

to using research about, for and through design, Sevaldson arrives at the conclusion that research by design more precisely describes "the inherent nature of design and designing as explorative and generative actions". However, Sevaldson himself notes how Research through Design 'probably engulfs' Research by Design (p. 13).

As Sevaldson's article illustrates, there exists multiple discussions concerning design research methodologies within different design research communities. Krogh et al. (2015, p. 4) discuss how the variety of shifting views, positions and prepositions that characterize design driven research has led to "obscuring the understanding of RtD". Krogh et al. describe RtD as "conceptualizing research done by means of the skillful practice of design activity revealing research insights" (p. 3). The authors conclude "that methodological foundations of RtD can be derived from a careful analysis of how design experiments are used during an inquiry" (p. 10). This focus on design experimentation frames the value of unintended insights that are gained through letting the projects 'drift', rather than following a strict process. Over the course of my inquiries, I found that this has resonated with my open-ended design explorations that have allowed for such drifting, rather than applying a more systemic approach, as accounted for by Sevaldson.

3.2.4 Reflective practice

Yee (2018) writes how the messy process of research in many ways is similar to that of design. Applying design as a mode of research has allowed me as a design practitioner to use my design skills, designer intuition and tacit knowledge from a decade of practice to explore my research questions by diverting and converting through a non-linear process. However, this has not been possible without first making the transition from designer to what Yee describes as the 'researcherly designer'. The researcherly designer becomes when the designer develops the ability to engage in a mode of reflective practice, through reflecting on the "why, how, and what" of own practice (Yee, 2018, p. 157).

Reflective practice requires the researcher to reflect both on, and in action (Schön, 1992; Moon, 1999). This entails retrospective reflection upon, for example design decisions and directions, but also reflecting through the situated making, where the act of designing becomes part of the reflexive process that uncovers new knowledge (Schön, 1992). This mode of reflexivity has brought forward personal reflections that have made clear meanings and understandings of service design and relations to popular

culture that I have implemented back into practice and education to arrive at the view and connections I bring forward in Chapter 4.

Throughout the course of this inquiry visualizing and writing have helped make tangible thoughts and actions to examine and advance my line of argument (see also section 3.4.3). In a sense, visualizing has helped me connect the dots of my understanding - cognitively but also literally by ways of mapping and drawing - to theoretical perspectives and wider socio-cultural and political economical concerns. Writing both design-related texts, such as briefs and presentation manuscripts, and academic papers and analysis has helped to "develop a coherent narrative" of my work and critical thinking skills (Yee, 2018, p. 157). The notion of 'writing design' Lees-Maffei (2012, p.1) presents, concerning design criticism overall, may apply more widely to designerly-research. She argues that it is 'a polyvalent and useful term for thinking about how text is used in design criticism, design history and design practice'. I would extend this to ways design artefacts, processes and writing dynamics, all a part of transdisciplinary analysis and method, may be understood as key to reflective and reflexive practice (Reich, 2017). This has aided related communication with partners, students and supervisors, to gain valuable insights and evaluation. This has included ways my ideas, views and understanding could be oriented to and communicated for and with these different constituencies as it were in my wider study, to multiple audiences within practice, academia, business and education through my communicative process entailing formulation of purpose, arrangement, and stylistic and linguistic choices (Reiff, 1996).

3.2.5 Experimental design inquiries

To investigate the contemporary cultural relations of, through, and within Service Design, I have situated my decade-long professional practice from design and branding in the fashion and cultures industries. By engaging in three experimental design inquiries with business parterns the designing of 21 culturally informed and conceptual Service Design 'artefacts' and 35 early conceptual sketches have been realized through my own design practice and through design-led practice together with students. These design artefacts have acted as investigative 'objects' to discover insights through the design itself (Seago & Dunne, 1999). I return to this in section 3.4.

Two of the design explorations have been carried out in part with 17 Master's students as part of two courses that I have co-tutored in collaboration with associate professor Natalia Agudelo, at the Oslo School of Architecture and

Design (AHO) between 2017-2018. I have also held three workshops with approx. 60 Bachelor's students at AHO that have resulted in an array of early ideational sketches that have contributed to inform this study. Figure 3.1 shows an overview of the main design outcomes of my own, and the participating students research-led practice, that together have informed this research inquiry. The design explorations are more fully accounted for through my publications, as well as in the second part of this chapter.

Researcher-practitioner		Student-researcher practitioners	Service design projects
Dennington, Claire		Betancourt, Anath Hojman	Keepers
	MA-SD 2 AHO 2017- P2	Freitas, Thiago	Oslo Community D-center
Service design projects		Hozbari, Melina	Do not waste your waste!
		Pippich, Miryam	Bik Bok Summer Camp
2017-P1		Sandoval, Simon Guzman	Smart Mirror
Kiwi Kids - Matpakka		Thomassen, Sofie A	Bik Bok Family Life
Kiwi Innovation Lab		Course coordinator & co-tutor Agudelo, Natalia	
2017-P2	MA-SD 2 AHO 2018-P3	Aasen, Vide Rebekka**	Access*
#Girl Talk		Breivik, Frida V D Drift***	Part of the Solution**
Into Infinity		Buvinic, Paulina*	Run the Magic***
Better Fashion Future		Byskov, Karen*	Skillmeet****
Bik Bok Better Bag		Dudani, Palak*	
		Kaasa, Ester**	
		Restan, Trygve Shadi****	
2018-P3		Smejkalova, Alice****	
Local		Thue, Frøya***	
Re-Wind		Treit, Timo****	
Auction for Action		Zhou, Mengxue***	
Go		Course coordinator & co-tutor Agudelo, Natalia	
Remix			

Figure 3.1 – An overview of the participants and the main design outcomes from the three design explorations. (Dennington, C., 2020).

Throughout these design explorations I have drawn on our collective design expertise and insights through a variety of design and research activities, where the materialities of making, and the materialization of knowledge have been explored (Morrison et al., 2019). Each design exploration has informed the next, building a catalogue of conceptual service designs and uncovering new knowledge through an ongoing cognitive, reflexive and analytical process, continuously moving between practice and research, and research back to practice. This allowed for me to implement new knowledge throughout the course of the inquiries, and to keep an open-ended and explorative approach to finding methods as questions arouse (Yee & Bremner, 2011). It also offered me the opportunity to explore the space between practice, education and research, and to develop the practical service design approach termed Trendslation, which further informed the design and research processes. I return to this in the second part of this chapter.

3.2.6 Modes of design experimentation

The three situated design explorations inquired into the open space between my research questions and the design intention of the design brief (Brandt & Binder, 2007), to reveal what is not obvious, but to show what is possible (Stappers et al., 2015). The 'doing of the design' assisted in (re-) framing perspectives and challenge pre-defined assumptions, by engaging in dynamic process problem framing and solution finding (Crouch & Pearce, 2013). This required a need to keep each exploration open-ended, to develop and pose questions alongside the findings from the design work and process, as new knowledge-ground manifested.

This experimental process could be seen between Krogh et al.'s (2015) definitions of serial and expansive design experimentation. Serial, in how the design explorations were carried out in a sequence of three, each influencing the next, and generating insights and new questions that shaped the work onwards. "The method of serial design experimentation denotes how design experiments are being carried out in a certain order or logic of locality determined by how neighbouring experiments in a sequence influence one another" (Krogh et al., 2015, p. 8). Expansive, in how these insights and findings articulated areas "as-yet uncovered with the ambition to reveal its qualities" (Krogh et al., 2015, p. 8).

For each design exploration a specific brief was developed for each exploration, between teaching, tutoring and further translated into teaching, and into the development of a practical approach and tools that further

initiated new findings. Continuous evolvement and expansion, as the learning from the experiments surfaced, contributed to reveal new knowledge, as the area was explored (Krogh et al., 2015). In this became visible the symbiosis between researching, designing, teaching, testing and developing, learning and reflecting in action (Schön, 1983).

3. 3 Roles, expertise and configurations

3.3.1 Different, linked and dynamic roles

These symbiotic and relational aspects point towards the different, yet relating roles I adopted throughout the course of this research; as a design practitioner, design researcher and design educator. The students that have been engaged in the research design activities have adopted roles as student designer co-researchers. Reflection upon my own roles, as well as observing and actively listening to the students, as well as partners, has allowed for a layering of views and voices that have provided rich encounters of data. It has involved moving and mediating between sites of practice, business, and education. In the following sections I reflect upon my roles of situated practitioner and reflective educator.

3.3.2 Knowing through embedded and situated practice-based inquiry

In engaging in research through design the designer's expertise and situated design practice is foundational as it enables knowledge-construction from within dynamic and changing fields (Vaughan, 2017). Being embedded as a practitioner and researcher in the design projects, gave me unique insights into the multi-layered and mediating role of Service Design, through my situated design work. "The situated nature of practice-based enquiry ensures that research undertaken will produce knowledge that both deepens understanding and provides tangible applications for practice" (Vaughan, 2017, p. 10). The site of practice and research shifted between my host university institution and time spent at the partnering organizations, situating myself in business, as well as educational contexts.

My presence when working with the partners allowed for first-person observation that gave an understanding of the partners viewed experience to better inform new decisions around further data collection (Taylor et al., 2015), and offered unique resources that I would likely not have accessed if I were not on site. It further offered significant insight into unique company cultures, by experiencing in the moment. New knowledge came to light

due to spontaneous conversations, comments, encounters and affective relations built over time (Tarr et al., 2017). Working abroad from the HQ of P3 resulted in observations, ideas and critical reflections through such spontaneity, from informal chats around the lunch table with co-team members with shared interests in lifestyle and popular cultural topics, to accessing glimpses into everyday life of working within an organization which itself could be seen as a cultural institution, to first-hand experience of the brands significant presence in, and impact on, the local community.

One example is how during one of my stays, P3 organized a global marketing event at their head quarters. The campus was filled with creative energy, of workshops, artists on site making art in real time, music and talks, filling the space with the spirit of the brand (Figure 3.2). I observed the visiting brand employees' display of vast amounts of cultural capital, as front-runners in street fashion, enacting as brand ambassadors and cultural intermediaries. This was a unique opportunity for me, as a designer and lifestyle enthusiast to feel, see and 'live' the brand experience, to ideate and reflect in situ, gaining first hand insight into a unique site of cultural production.

Figure 3.2 – An example of the creative and popular cultural experiential mode of P3 that contributed to inform this study. Source: Photo by author.

3.3.3 Knowing through teaching and observing students

The two courses that I co-tutored were part of the research-focused module of the Master's program at AHO, with the aim to engage students in design-led research. The course content and briefs were framed by my initial research questions, and through findings from my participatory practice with partners. By connecting in-studio practice with the theoretical perspectives of the semantic transformation I became aware of the need to reframe and convey my research suited for teaching, enacting as an intermediary between practice research and education.

The students engaged in a mode of participatory inquiry, a learning process interweaving knowing, doing, making and relating (Heape, 2015). Their primary role was to produce conceptual service design artefacts by operationalizing the Trendslation approach in the making, and to engage with research to acquire knowledge of relations between theory and practice. The students were also provided with research diaries and developed visual essays that allowed me to analyze and gain insight into their processes. Through the dedicated weekly space of what my colleague Natalia Agudelo introduced as 'Research Mondays', we engaged the students in reflective discussions to help them scaffold their knowledge, to analytically articulate 'how they know what they know', and to see their design practice in relation to wider socio-economical and political concerns. One example was how I introduced students to Garland's *First Things First Manifesto* (1963) where after they had to write personal manifestos that expressed their values as designers, which in return prompted them to reflect upon their role when working in collaboration with commercial brands. Through enacting a "democratic and explorative teacher role that focuses on framing, investigating and posing questions", I saw myself as adopting the role of 'reflective educator' (Hjorth et al., 2016, p. 32).

Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998, p.2) write how "a good education should prepare students as researchers who can 'read the world' in such a way that they not only can understand it but so they can change it". I found it important to expose the students to the potential agency of their design practice, and to encourage them to use this educational context to explore freely and to challenge the partners beyond their current status quo by "inspiring" change through their conceptual service designs. This was due to the fact that I at some occasions could sense that the students, in facing major corporate brands, felt certain pressure to design something plausible or 'right'. In such, it could be that all though my intention was to open a space

of possibilities, I was indeed influencing the students in a direction of my personal values, which I offer some reflections upon in section 3.5.3.

3.4 Qualitative mixed methods

3.4.1 Toggling between research and design methods

As this design-driven and transdisciplinary exploration of Service Design and its potential cultural connectivity has not formerly been investigated, there has not been much guidance as to what methods to use. Rather, the explorative and multidisciplinary nature of this Service Design-driven inquiry has called for a flexible approach to choice of methods. I have chosen to move between dynamic sets of qualitative research methods and constructive design methods (Mainsah & Morrison, 2013; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Such a mix of methods can provide "multiple ways of seeing" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.4), and provide stronger findings, as each method can bring forward additional insight into the subject of exploration (Burton & Pedersen, 2015).

Starting this inquiry, I did not set out with one fixed set of methods in a rigid system. Rather, I let the method sets develop and needed to adjust them, and my approach to fit but also to delve into each exploration to gain multiple perspectives, and in order to better inform new decisions around further data collection (Taylor et al., 2015). In this sense I was involved in a continuous negotiation and toggling between qualitative research methods, and lateral design methods and design techniques that allowed for making and reflection in action (Schön, 1992).

Figure 3.3 shows the relation between my research questions, the research methods, design tools and techniques, and research data of this inquiry.

3.4.2 Research methods

Researching through practice requires ways to capture what is not necessarily obvious at first glance. In practice based inquiry, participant observation is considered a way of "making relations between what is learned" in movements between design practice and the field sites (Gunn & Løgstrup, 2014, p. 431). Participatory observation can be utilized as a material form of engagement over time, as throughout a design process, to arrive at interpretive knowledge and 'thick descriptions' of particular research contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Throughout this study I observed partners

RQ1
RQ2
RQ3

RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN

Research Methods

Participatory observation
Semi-structured interviews

21 Service design artefacts
16 Research diaries
11 Visual essays

Design Tools
& Techniques

Drawing
Sketching
Notating
Writing
Mapping
Diagramming

Research Data

21 Service design artefacts
Participant observation
Open-ended conversations
11 student interviews

Figure 3.3 – The relation between research and lateral methods, design tools and techniques, research data and research questions. (Dennington, C., 2020)

in meetings and presentations, students in engaging with the semantic transformation, in presentations and feedback sessions with partners, and through tutoring, to arrive at multiple views from within practice, business and education, as well as observing the social and contextual situations to understand and learn by inference (Spradley, 2016) to advance new relations and connections between and across service design and cultural constructs.

Open-ended conversations with partners and students, and semi-structured interviews with students have provided insights and knowledge at several levels and needs. These included matters such as trend transformation and relevance in service design, through active listening where I have used strategies such as checking perceptions, paraphrasing, reflecting, interpreting and summarizing (Ayres, 2008). Observations and interviews were recorded through field notes, photography, and video.

3.4.3 Visual and experiential methods

As I am trained as a design professional, researching from within a design-domain the creative and visual aspects of the methods chosen have been significant. The use of such creative and experimental interdisciplinary methods can reveal relations across and between disciplines (Lury, et al., 2018). Visualizing information during a research process can function on several levels: as a reflection and exploration tool, as an analysis and knowledge generation tool, and as a communication, facilitation and discussion tool (Yee, 2017). Figure 3.4 shows a mapping of some qualitative research methods that have been applied throughout this explorative design-led research approach.

The qualitative and visual methods used in this inquiry have included visual research diaries for scaffolding knowledge and to create a dedicated space for reflection and reflexive practice (Engin, 2011; Nadin & Cassel, 2006; Schön, 1983). "Diaries provide a designer a vehicle to carry out self-reflective modes of inquiry and analysis as well as include subjective, associative, automatic dialogue with the process. They are also a medium that binds design creation and design intention." (Preston & Thomassen, 2010, p. 49).

In the third design exploration the diaries that were given to the students were accompanied with a pre-defined set of colour coded stickers for the students to stick to get 'unstuck', and to highlight key insights (Figure 3.5, p. 78). Figures 3.6 - 3.8, illustrated over the following pages, show how the diaries facilitated for both visual and textual 'thinking', and also how the questions prompted insights and reflections.

REFLECTION

EXPLORATION

ANALYSIS

COMMUNICATION

drawing	notating	sd artefact
diagramming	research diary	observation
writing	visual essay	semi-structured interviews
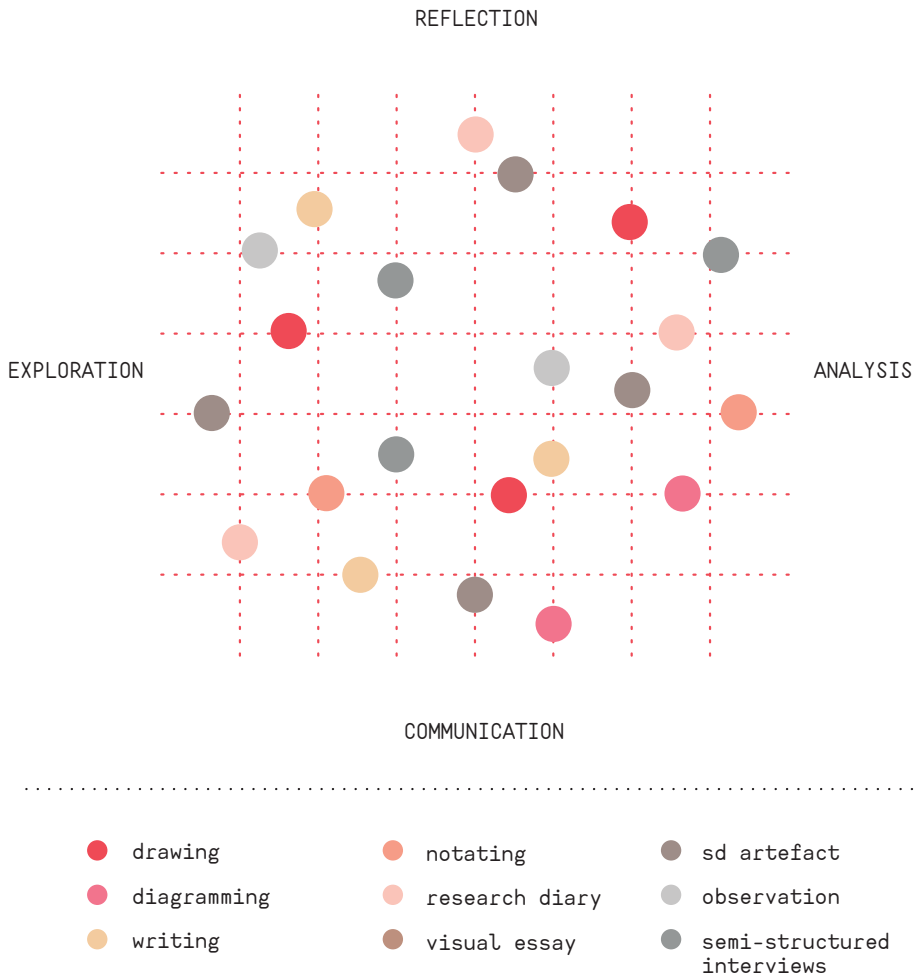
Figure 3.4 – A mapping of qualitative research methods that have been applied throughout this explorative design-led research approach. The mapping further shows the main mode of inquiry that each method has facilitated. (Dennington, C., 2020).

Visual essays were developed to inform statements and arguments through the synergies of multimodal expression of images, words, design and layout (Pauwels, 2012). These visual essays revealed key aspects of the three stages of semantic transformation (Figure 3.9).

The design process and final results, as 'service design artefacts', offered more informed statements as to the transformation process, and to access insight into how the trends were interpreted, synthesized and communicated throughout the design work, in addition to offering new conceptual service solutions (Figure 3.10). Zimmerman and Forlizzi (2008) pose how design artefacts function as theoretical models that link the current state to the preferred. In section 3.5.4 I further describe these service design artefacts as data that have revealed insight into the processes and practice of the semantic transformation of trends in service design.

Figure 3.5 – Pre-defined questions and colour-coded stickers to assist the students in reflexive modes, and to access key insights through the research diaries. (Dennington, C., 2018).

Figure 3.6 – Visual and textual student reflection. The multi-modal expressions of writing, hand sketching and assembly of visual material assisted in both reflection and communication. (Dudani, P., 2018). Photo by author.
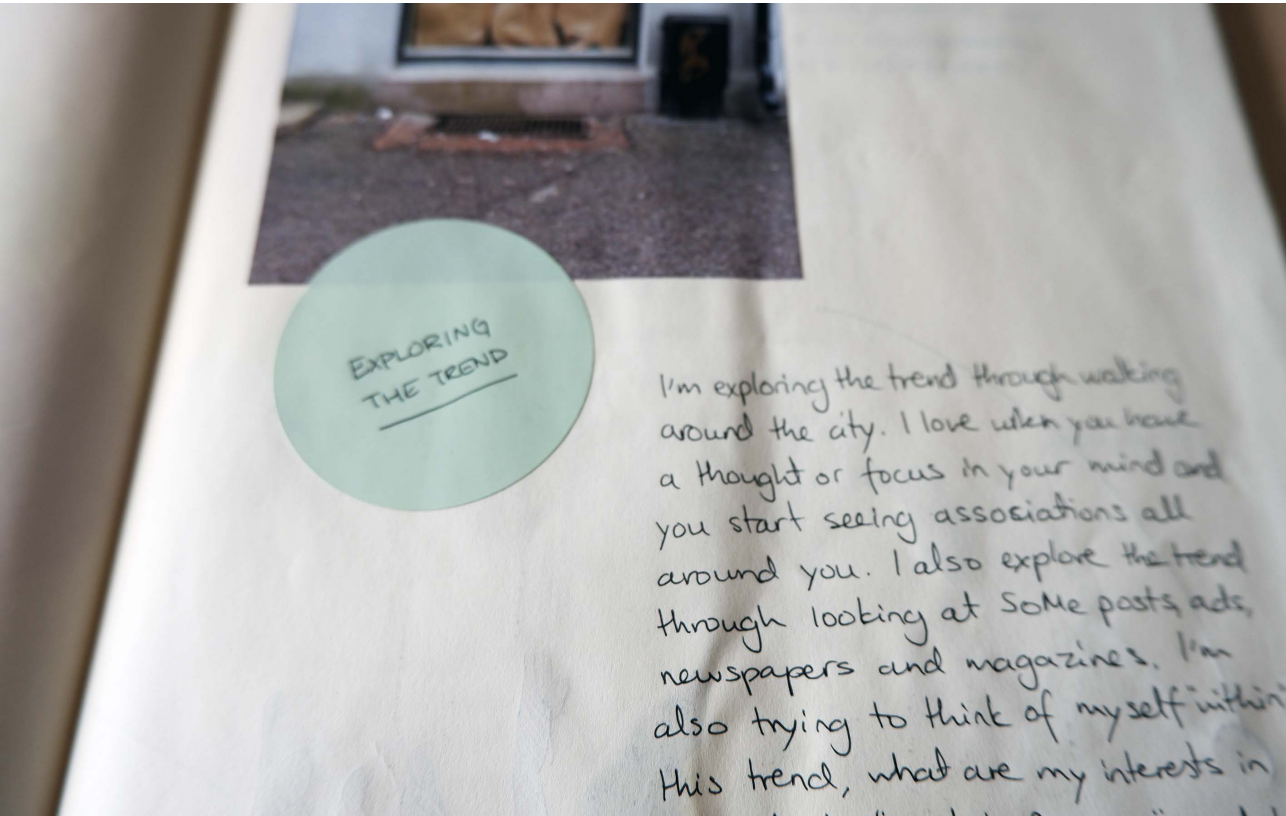
Figure 3.7 – Written student reflection, that provided insight into modes of trend-exploration.
(Byskov, K., 2018). Photo by author.
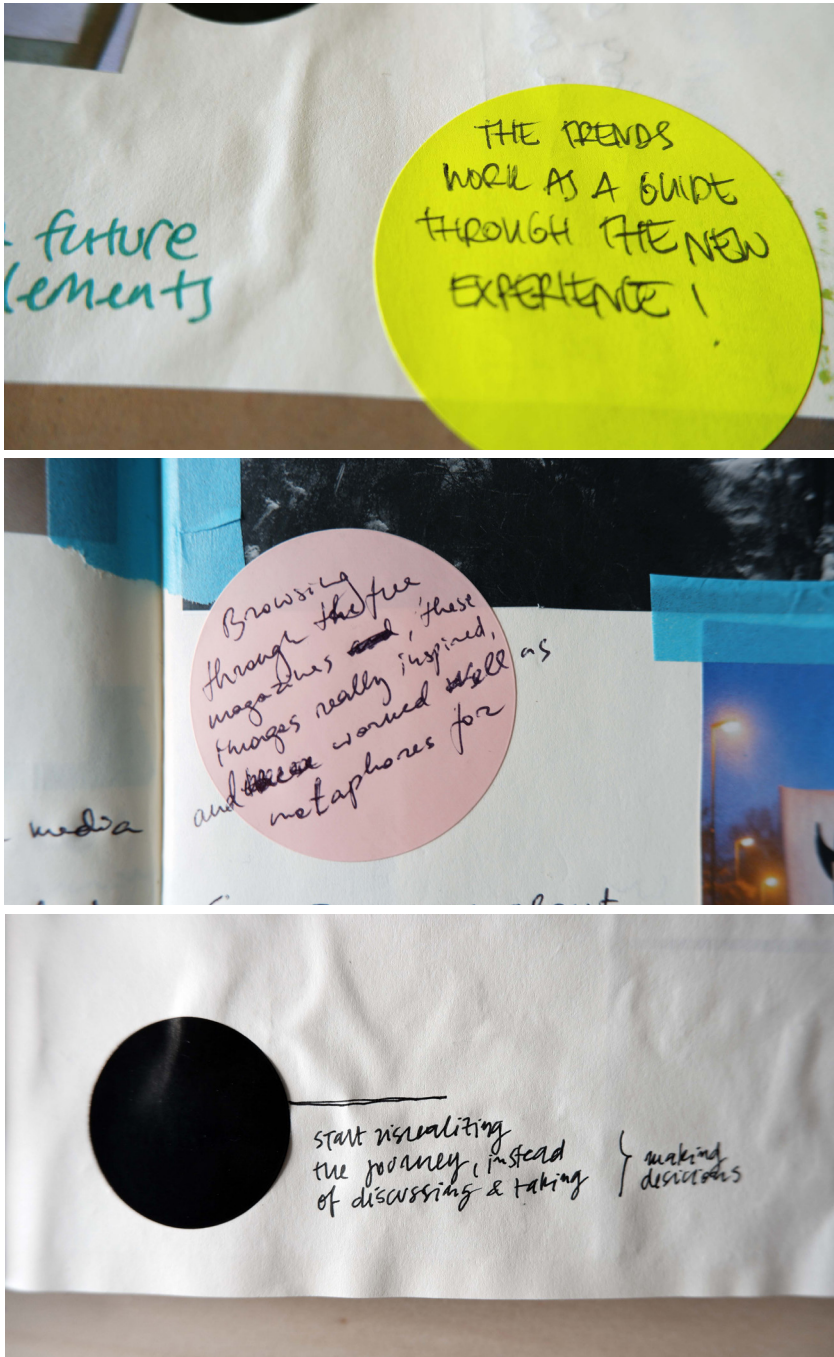
Figure 3.8 – Examples of student insights in research diaries, where trends were used to guide design decisions, and visualisation used as a means for trend-exploration. (Smejkalova, A., 2018; Treit, T., 2018; Buvinic, P., 2018). Photos by author.

Figure 3.9 – Visual essays as reflexive and communicative modes of inquiry. The image is from the AHO Works exhibition 2018, in which the essays and diaries are seen on display.
Source: Photo by Solveig Knutsen.
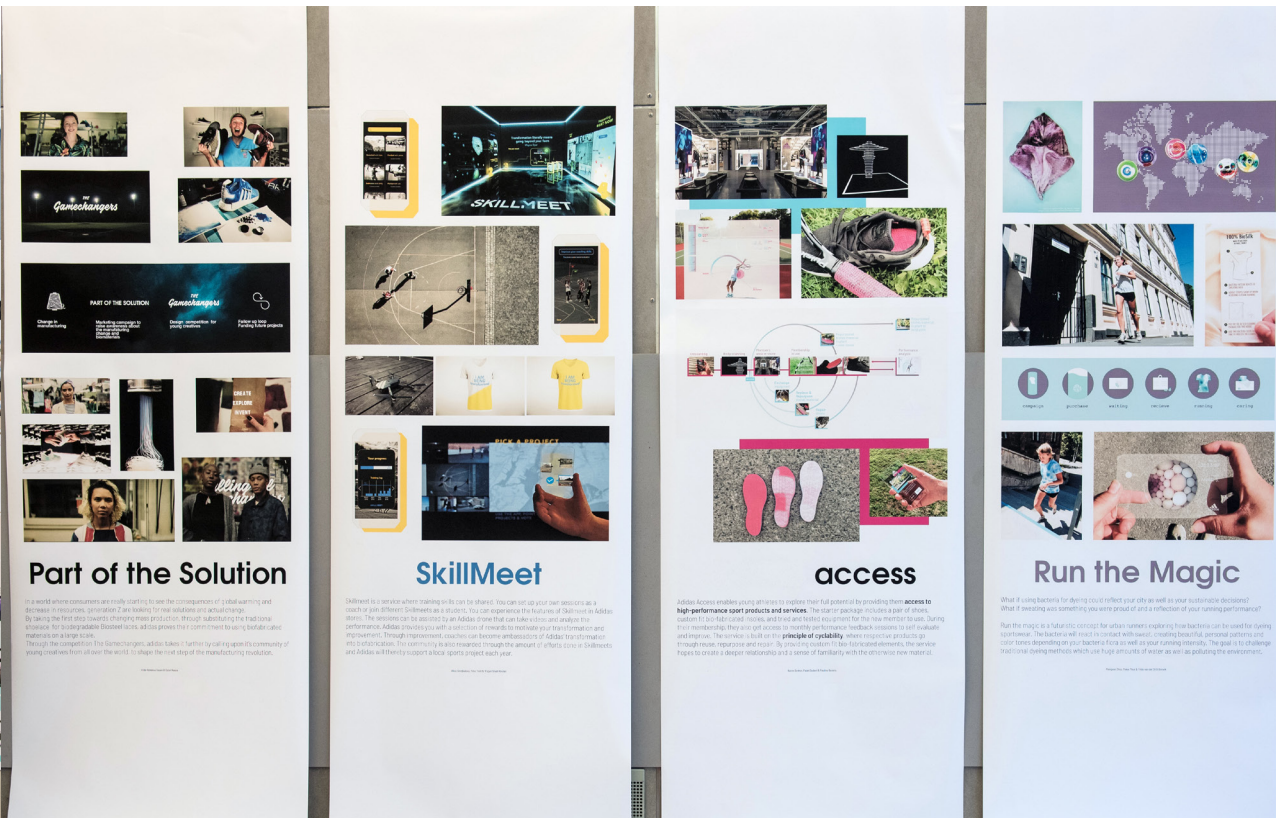
Figure 3.10 – Design-rich and communicative representations of conceptual services. The image is from the AHO Works exhibition 2018. Source: Photo by Solveig Knutsen.

3.4.4 Knowing through do-ing

Celia Lury et. al (2018) propose that from within the *do-ing* of interdisciplinary research methods we are able to imagine how to intervene with and activate present contexts, emerging processes and eventual and potential outcomes. In this section I have chosen to pull forward some design-rich and communicative research methods that I drew on, and that provided me with ways to form and activate and to reflect on my own professional performance and expertise in the projects.

3.4.4.1 Drawing and sketching

Hand sketching and drawing have been actively used to prompt visual and exploratory ways of thinking and reflecting to expose the unthought-of and unexpected, as well as for ideating, conceptualizing and communicating (Reason, 2018). Krogh et al., (2015) note how sketches can materialize ideas in flux, subject to both incremental and radical changes, while Reason (2018) suggests how drawing, as a creative expression, can function as a transformative process to uncover, generate and communicate new knowledge. This method has helped to provoke, revoke and evoke tacit knowledge, through direct representations and abstract interpretations, to make visible the invisible (Figure 3.11).
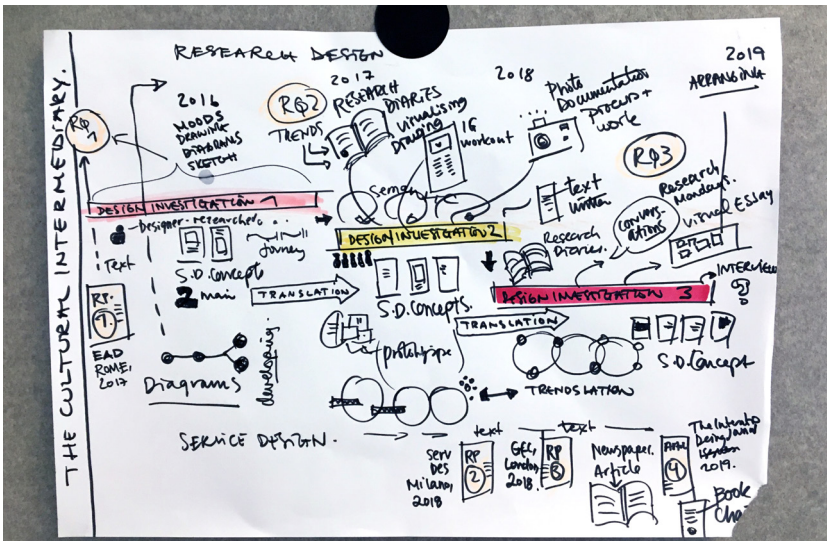
Figure 3.11 – Example of dynamic research sketching. Theoretical and practical constructions and connections of my research areas and questions are visualized in order to uncover insights and new knowledge. (Dennington, C., 2019).

Markussen et al. (2012) propose what they term dynamic research sketching as a tool for enabling the visualization of theoretical construction and interplay. Throughout this research, active sketching has been used to expose existing and new theoretical connections, to explore layering of frameworks, and to "see" how theory and practice may bridge, intersect, or even oppose and confront one and other. Such sketches have also been used throughout this inquiry to discuss with supervisors and fellow colleagues, and to further unravel the theoretical tangle that follows interdisciplinary research.

3.4.4.2 Mapping and diagramming

Mapping has been used as a means to externalize ideas and contextualize knowledge (Yee, 2018), while diagramming has offered a way to think through temporal, spatial, conceptual and visual layers (Davies & Scalway, 2018). Figures 3.12 - 3.14 show examples of how such visual mapping and diagrams can enable complex and often closed spaces to become legible for wider dissemination and discussion. These methods contributed to capture and communicate the essence of wide spanning topics, complex concepts or incomplete notions and ideas, internally as a personal reflexive method of inquiry, but also externally to discuss with supervisors, fellow PhD students, non-designers and design students.
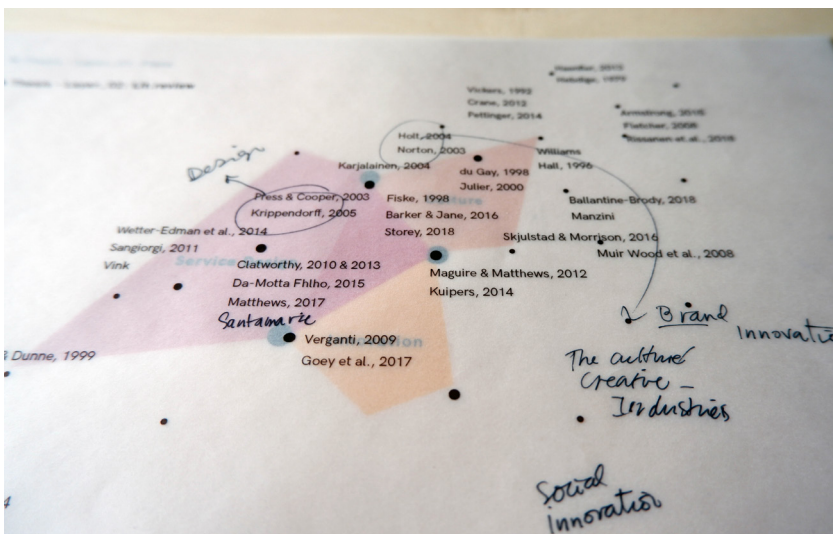
Figure 3.12 – Layered diagrams. Diagram layers were physically placed in relation to each other to reveal connections. The layer on top shows the mapping of literature from figure 3.7, where as the lower layer is an abstracted diagram of the main fields, and a simplified version of figure 3.6. (Dennington, C., 2019).

Design & Culture

● Thesis - Layer_01: **Field**

Cultural Intermediaries
framing, dissemination and qualification of
meanings and commodities in processes of
symbolic (cultural) production

Service Design
service design as creative and
culturally informed

Popular / New Media Culture
identity creation through mediatization
of cultural knowledge

Service Design
service design as experiences
that happen over time, through
touch-points

**Popular
Culture**

Fashion & Identity
fashion as experiential, trend-sen-
sitive, style-focused and "it" factor
& symbolic practices

Service Design
Brand, meaning, cultural,
symbolic, ritual

**Service
Design**

Symbolic value
cultural capital / identity

**Service
Innovation**

Cultural brands

**Approaches, methods
& tools**

Meaning innovation

Design & Innovation

Culture & Innovation

Figure 3.13 – Layered diagrams. This diagram has assisted in thinking both conceptually
and spatially to contextualize and externalize knowledge, and shows an early mapping of the
landscape of theoretical concepts that my work draws on, and connections between these.
(Dennington, C., 2019).

Haenfler, 2013
Hebdige, 1979

● Thesis - Layer_02: **Lit.review**

Vickers, 1992
Crane, 2012
Pettinger, 2014

Armstrong, 2015
Fletcher, 2008
Rissanen et.al., 2018

Holt, 2004
Norton, 2003
Karjalainen, 2004

Williams
Hall, 1996

du Gay, 1998
Julier, 2000

Press & Cooper, 2003
Krippendorff, 2005

Fiske, 1998
Barker & Jane, 2016
Storey, 2018

Ballantine-Brody, 2018
Manzini

Wetter-Edman et al., 2014
Sangiorgi, 2011
Vink

Skjulstad & Morrison, 2016
Muir Wood et al., 2008

Clatworthy, 2010 & 2013
Da-Motta Fhlho, 2015
Matthews, 2017

Maguire & Matthews, 2012
Kuipers, 2014

Seago & Dunne, 1999

Verganti, 2009
Goey et al., 2017

Vargo & Lusch, 2004

Best & Paterson, 2010

Figure 3.14 – Mapping literature layer. This image shows an abstracted mapping of relevant literature that has assisted in identifying gaps. (Dennington, C., 2019).

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3.4.4.3 Notating and writing

Notating and writing has been used to document information, and to produce knowledge through for example noting perceptions, imaginations and mental operations (Wedell, 2018). Writing in different styles, from creative to academic, for diverse audiences, has been vital in the shaping and dissemination of new knowledge. This has included writing design briefs, presentation scripts, conference papers and a journal article, a chapter in a business-oriented book and a debate article in a cultures and research focused Norwegian newspaper.

I have also investigated visual abstraction of my texts to reveal patterns or connections through visual interpretations of the written words (Sadokierski & Sweetapple, 2015). By using visual codes such as colour, shapes or lines I could reduce the text into analytical and communicative entities that offered a way to see new connections. This also allowed for interpretations of the text in a way that may have not been apparent through non-visual methods (Sadokierski & Sweetapple, 2015). One example was how I colour-coded a one-pager synthesis of my Exegesis in which the text was reduced to Positioning, Argument and Fields, which helped me create links between and across the content of this Exegesis.

3.4.5 Conceptual and empirical data

The qualitative research data revealed through these mixed methods is manifold, both empirical and conceptual, and has assisted me in advancing views and exposing relations in my understanding of the semantic transformation occurring through service design, and to explore new service design cultural theoretical connections. Brinkmann (2014, p. 722) describes the "dilemma of data", how rather than data 'as the given', data is what is "taken, constructed and selected" in qualitative inquiry. In between the ongoing process of interpretation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and abductive reasoning, data has "occurred in situations of breakdown, surprise, bewilderment, or wonder" (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). The data are results of contextual sense-making in situated and interactional 'instances' (Brinkmann, 2014), such as through the explorative and experimental making and learning processes of the design inquiries. Data from this study comprises participative observations, open-ended conversations, semi-structured interviews and service design artefacts.

The resulting conceptual service design artefacts in the shape of rich visual and annotated service representations, designed by both myself, and by the

students serve as data units in themselves. Gaver (2012, p. 937) notes how artefacts can be viewed as embodying choices made by the designer that mirror issues of importance, and the "designers' judgments about valid ways to address the possibilities and problems" implicit in given contexts and situations. Artefacts become data in the way the researcher poses questions about them and interprets meaning through them (Given, 2008), whereas reflection upon the artefacts allow for articulation of a range of insights (Gaver, 2012). I questioned, for example, the ways in which the trends were translated, implemented or used as guides for design decisions, and where, and in what ways the trends manifested in the final design solutions. Further, I probed how issues regarding trends, cultural meaning and value were navigated and articulated in the final design results, and also more speculatively questioning what implications the design solutions would bear upon in wider socio-cultural and economical framings.

The synthesis and analysis of data has been enabled by active listening, lengthy and full discussions, joint reflection sessions, annotated visuals and writing (Ayress, 2008; Geer & Sweeney, 2012). Figure 3.15 on the following pages shows an overview of the data generated together with why and how they were made, what the data does and the data location. The data has aided new questions that probe deeper into my research topics, contributed to prompt insights and understanding concerning service design's cultural reflexivity and furthered the development of theoretical knowledge and the popular cultural service perspective that I take up in Chapter 4.

3.5 Reflections upon methodology, methods and bias

3.5.1 Designerly ways of knowing

As the cross-disciplinary space that this inquiry has sought to investigate has sparse formally developed work to build upon, it has not taken on a traditional cultural studies or social science approach to choice of methods to look upon a phenomena, rather, it is an explorative study from within and through service design, which is also reflected through the choice of methods chosen. It has been through the 'doing' and making, and reflection upon and through design materials that knowledge has come to light (Schön, 1992). I acknowledge that there may have been additional or alternative methods that could have been chosen to inform this study, such as conducting additional and more structured interviews, or by providing a more fully accounted for narrative photographic documentation of the developmental process. Still, I have found that the methods chosen have contributed to 'appropriate data' that has been essential for the progression of analysis (Morse, 2006).

Types / Desc. of data 	Description What is it?	Intention Why is it made?	Technique How is it made?
Service design artefacts P1	2 designer researcher made SD artefacts	Develop and reflect upon the semantic transformation throughout design process.	Semantic exploration. Using design tools and techniques.
Service design artefacts P2	4 designer researcher made SD artefacts 6 student-made SD artefacts	Observe and reflect upon development of triple staged semantic trans. process, cultural intermediary roles, meaning interpretation and conveyance	Using design tools and techniques & development of Trendslation and experiential service journey.
Service design artefacts P3	5 designer researcher made SD artefacts 4 student-made SD artefacts	Development of Trendslation, reflect upon meaning conveyance through experience-centric journey and culturally located touch-points	Using design tools and tecnhiques through structured Trendslation approach
Participant observation	Design researchers notes and sketches from observing students and partners in design projects, presentations and feedback sessions	To understand how students engage with Trendslation approach and trend/service design potentials	Conducting open ended conversations through tutoring, in workshop settings and dedicated learning space "Research Monday"
Semi-structured Interviews	11 interviews with design students	To provide an understanding of trend translation and relevance in practice and education	30 min. video recordings in which students are asked questions regarding learning, design process and reflections
Annotated research diaries	15 annotated and visual Research diaries	Gain insight into student design process and key turning points, and how cultural meaning and material is accessed and ariculated	Writing, sketching, diagramming.

Gathered How is it stored?	Position Where is it located?	Involvement Who is involved?	About Where is it discussed?	Function What does it do?
Private repository and pdf. presentation.	AHO 2016 Oslo-region	Complete designer researcher participation P1	Publication 1 & 2	Explores how cultural material can be utilized in the innovation process, and how the service designer actively uses semiotic resources.
Private repository, AHO repository, design brief and pdf. presentation.	AHO 2017 Oslo-region	Complete designer researcher participation 6 MA student participants P2	Publication 2	Explores and reflects upon semantic trend transformation and cultural intermediary roles.
Private repository, AHO repository, design brief, pdf. and video presentation.	AHO 2018 Oslo-region Germany	Complete designer researcher participation 11 MA student participants P3	Publication 3 & 4	Explores and reflects upon implementation of Trendslation, experience-centric journey and service designer as cultural intermediary.
Private field notes, sketches, photography.	AHO 2017-2018 Oslo-region Germany	Moderate participation	Publication 2 & 3	Insight and situated knowledge in triple semantic transformation in SD and modes of meaning construction and conveyance.
Private repository, video and design researcher notes	AHO 2018	Passive participation		Feedback from students on learning process, challenges and opportunities. Feedback from partners on relevance.
Private repository	AHO 2016-2018	Moderate designer researcher participation. 15 MA students.	Publication 3 & 4	Provides visual and textual reflections on student design process.

Vaughan (2017, p. 118) poses how "Embracing the language of design practice in the articulation of design research will be essential if we are to engage fully with the possibilities of design research in and through practice". In my practice this language consisted of a mix of visual and textual modes, such as visual diagrams or moodboards, for more accessible and intuitive communication and to expose new knowledge, but also through "thinking visually" by way of analogies and metaphors to communicate with non-designer partners. I find that this has contributed to an insider view and understanding that may have been challenging to attain if not through design practice.

I also found this designer language invaluable in negotiating and setting up projects with partners. Before initiating each design exploration I engaged in several initial meetings with key individuals in each organization, to discuss their brand values, needs and expectations. I held presentations, and developed project proposals and visual timelines that translated and conveyed the cultural, creative and economic value and relevance of my research. This entailed a fine-tuned movement between research and practice, and further into business, in which I became aware of attaining an intermediary role between the cultural, creative material of my work, and the cultural and economic value of the partnering brand.

In this open-ended service design cultural investigation, I chose to apply visual and affective methods that could translate, mediate and capture more affective, interpretive and intuitive aspects of the process. In such, the methods could perhaps be described as 'intermediary methods' allowing for visual and textual thinking and reflection. Throughout the design explorations the use of my skillset, or designer language, became significant in communicating and creating common understandings of key issues, and also for digging deeper into the inquiries, manifesting the role of the designer researcher.

I have sought to bring forward new thoughts, knowledge, and practices "to see multiple openings and complexities" and "to explore and bring together multiple contemporary problematics that constitute knowledge" (Lather, 1993, p. 675). However, I note that, as Reich (2017) forwards, for any concept there are multiple competing interpretations that have value in different contexts. I realize that what I have found valuable to forward to advance new knowledge in this study may have been of less value for, for example, business partners or students. This is something I further reflect upon in Chapter 5.

3.5.2 Experimenting with methods

As a designer researcher I have used my professional service design knowledge to curate a set of methods and tailored techniques for investigating and questioning service design's cultural reflexivity. In this sense, I have engaged in what Mainsah and Morrison (2013) term methodological experimentation to mirror the multidisciplinary perspectives that can be explored through practice. This sheds light on how design tools and techniques become central in knowledge production and communication in design led research (Mainsah & Morrison, 2013).

Throughout my inquiry some methods were designed and tested, but not developed further. Still, I found that they offered some insights that I have found valuable. One example was the design of an Instagram-workout method that I introduced to the students in the second design exploration (Figure 3.16). Using the social media image-sharing platform Instagram, the students were asked to photograph snapshots of insights, questions and tensions from their research diaries, together with short explanatory caption texts, and adding predefined hashtags and emojis. The students were in this sense placing their insights in a new, shared context, co-creating a 'feed' (stream of information) in which they could comment on each others work (revealing new insights), in a mediatized and popular cultural language and expression, which illuminated how the method itself could be seen to enact an intermediary role.

Figure 3.16 – Instagram-workout. Students using their mobile devices to capture and share images of key insights and reflections from their research diaries. Photo by author.

In looking back upon how the research design of this inquiry unfolded, made me contemplate how perhaps a Service Design-driven research mode could offer a RtD method of a research journey. Designing a research journey could assist in organizing, planning and mapping the methods, practice, key data and insights throughout a timeline. Each method could be seen as a touch-point, or method-point as noted by Andrew Morrison, contributing to the overall research design, development and outcome.

3.5.3 Reflections upon research rigour and bias

Engaging as a situated designer researcher brings forth aspects concerning bias and orientation. "Particularly when the data must 'go through' the researcher's mind before they put it on paper, the worry about subjectivity arises. Does, perhaps the observer record only what he or she wants to see rather than what is actually there?" (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 33) In the socio-constructivist research through design interpretive framework that my research is situated within, the researcher is seen as an integral part of the process and final result where the separation of these "is neither possible nor desirable" (Galdas, 2017, p. 2). Meaning is constructed through the subjective analysis, interpretation, synthesis and articulation of data by the qualitative researcher (Morse, 2006). The reflexive mode of the researcher seeks to unravel existing relations to bring forward new thoughts and practices, in which validity, rather than reinforcing a scientific truth, is seen as open-ended and context sensitive, as multiple and partial, even transgressive (Lather, 1993). However, Galdas (2017) points out the pertinence of the researcher to be critically self-reflexive and transparent to matters of own preconceptions and relational dynamics to expose possible bias.

Throughout the course of this research I have tried to consciously navigate my different roles and responsibilities, as a designer-researcher and tutor, as a former service employee and entrepreneur, and also as a consumer with a personal interest in popular cultural lifestyles to become aware of and expose what it is I assume, already expect to find, and how this is informed by my personal values and beliefs (Sherri & Labbo, 2004). Within the framing of commercial interests of this inquiry, I have been working with brands that are present in my everyday life. In this sense, I have not been free from preconceptions. On one hand I viewed the partnering brands as actors that contribute to the root course of mass consumption. On the other, P3, for example, is a brand that has followed me throughout my personal life, as a front-runner in popular cultural lifestyle, and worked as a device with which to reflect through on a range of activities and projects.

Trying to unite these contradictions has become evident through my design solutions. The direction of the design explorations were guided by my personal advocacy for implementing service solutions towards more sustainable consumption practices, as this was not, at the time, part of the partnering brands strategic focus in a service-centered customer experience view. In this sense my personal beliefs may have coloured the analytical focus, also in terms of assuming that commercial brands are willing to invest towards a sustainable shift, yet they are profit-driven and part of the wider problem. However, in conversations with the partners, they yielded positive responses to the value of using service design approaches to expose the possibilities of changing practices, and to thinking beyond their current product focus. I see this as an outcome for the partners and for me as a designer and researcher.

In regards to the students, I found that discussing their perceptions of and relations to commercial brands, including the partnering brands, brought forth understandings regarding their personal positioning. Asking the students to articulate the main reasons they wanted to pursue a design career revealed reoccurring answers relating to the desire to help people, and to effect positive societal change. In light of these responses, I encouraged them to preserve and utilize these values in their service design work, also in commercial partnerships. The final student deliveries were evaluated and graded by an external sensor, in line with the course criteria and the framing of the design briefs. In this sense I held the role of a pedagogical intermediary between the goals of the project, the course/studio and its briefs, and my own emerging design research and reflections on its workings and analysis, yet not as a final assessor of the outcomes of the student work.

3.6 Developing an experiential Service Design approach through practice

3.6.1 Exploring the mechanisms of meaning-construction

In this second part of Chapter 3, I will over the following sections present the main insights, concepts, and key findings that surfaced throughout three design explorations with industry partners. The designing of conceptual services by both myself, and by participating students, have provided analytical accounts of a triple-semantic transformation in service design, and the exploration of meaning-constructing mechanisms throughout this process. Figure 3.17 (p. 97) shows an overview of the relational aspects of the design explorations, main insights and findings, and of the design results.

This has informed the development of *Trendslation*, an experiential approach for a triple-semantic-transformation of trends into service offerings and details. The development of this approach offered insights and revealed findings that further triggered the development of the practical tool of the experience-centric service journey. The approach further revealed the potentials of trends as Service Design material, and the notion of culturally informed touch-points. For fuller accounts of the design explorations, these are also discussed in my publications.

3.6.2 A first conceptual model of the triple-semantic transformation

My former professional practice with designing the service *Prefall*, described in Publication 1, provided valuable insights into the potentials of Service Design's cultural connectivity and influence, and offered a foundation of tacit knowledge that I used forward into this research. This helped shape my research questions related to the investigation of a wider cultural understanding of Service Design in a contemporary and popular framing, and of indicative practical ways for Service Design to become more culturally aligned. This, in addition to a preliminary literature and design review, prompted the notion of how cultural material and meaning could be used to design novel service solutions. I developed a first conceptual model to frame the cycles and conceptualization of the identified triple-semantic-transformation process in Service Design. This preliminary work resulted in Publication 1. The findings and discussions from this publication served as the foundation for developing the design brief for the first design exploration.

3.6.3 Design exploration #1

The first Service Design exploration was conducted in 2016 (February – August) together with the Norwegian grocery brand *Kiwi* (P1), in which I adopted the role as designer researcher and practitioner. The main focus of this inquiry was to explore how cultural phenomena could impact the innovation stage of Service Design concept development, and the construction of meaning throughout a semantic transformation process. This work resulted in two conceptual services, one in the shape of a branded innovation lab, and the other as a playful, co-creative and educational service for healthy, pre-packed lunches for school children.

Figure 3.17 – Mapping relational aspects of the design explorations and main insights and findings. (Dennington, C., 2020).

2016

Design exploration #1

● 2 Service Design artefacts

Shaping a view on trends as SD innovation material
Service designer as cultural intermediary?
Lack of formalized trend transformation SD approach

Reflection in action > Analysis > Synthesis >

Findings > Design brief #2

2017

Design exploration #2

● 4 Service Design artefacts

Service designer as translator and curator of meaning
Interpreting and communicating meaning through rich visuals
Shaping Trendslation - triple-staged-semantic transformation
Touch-points as cultural signifiers

○ 6 Service Design artefacts

First semantic transformation identified as Scan & Understand
Second semantic transformation identfied as Conceptualize
Third semantic transformation identified as Implement

Reflection and observation in action > Analysis > Synthesis >

Findings > Design brief #3

2018

Design exploration #3

● 5 Service Design artefacts

The service designer as cultural intermediary
Developing the experiential moodboard
Need for experience-centric service journey
Designing culturally informed touch-points

○ 4 Service Design artefacts

Conveying service tone-of-voice in experiential moodboard
Significance of visual and experiential SD tools
Potential of stuctured Trendslation approach

Reflection and observation in action > Analysis > Synthesis >

Findings

● Designer researcher

○ Students

3.6.3.1 Shaping a view on trends as innovation material

This first exploration revealed how I, as the service designer could benefit from actively scanning and applying cultural trends to prompt new ideas, and to shape trend-aligned offerings and details. I found that cultural material, experiences and expressions showed potential in triggering new ideas, through mixed media sketching that assisted in identifying how meaning was shaped through my interpretation, synthesis, and communication of cultural material (Figure 3.18 & 3.19).

Analytically, this pointed towards how the service designer could be cast in a cultural intermediary position in shaping design innovation. A first attempt of comprising a more structured approach was engaged by analyzing the three cyclic processes of identification, translation and synthesis of trends that I had operationalized through practice. I found that my interpretation, meaning construction, and the transition into designed service concepts, became central. This is discussed more in Publication 1. Further, I found that all though the service designer, in similar to product or fashion designers, could be expected to be a relevant trend transformer, there was a lack of discourse regarding the translation of trends in Service Design, neither were there any formalized Service Design approaches or tools to assist in such. This prompted me to look further into this in the second design exploration.

3.6.4 Design exploration #2

The second design exploration was conducted together with the young women's fashion brand *Bik Bok* (P2) in 2017 (February – June) in which I enacted as a designer researcher, practitioner and design educator. It was executed partly in collaboration with six Master's students within my research teaching term through the module The Nextperience, as part of the Service Design 2 course at AHO (March – May). The students were informed with a design brief based on insights and findings from my practice with P1, and were introduced to the semantic steps that I had identified. The design brief included a design challenge and written research reflections in research diaries. The aim was for the students to operationalize the three stages of semantic transformation in a more formalized approach, to explore how the trends could shape new conceptual service ideas and touch-points, through designing service design concepts. This allowed me to develop a working model to assist in the translation. In this exploration the brand's values and thematic focus were implemented as an additional framework.
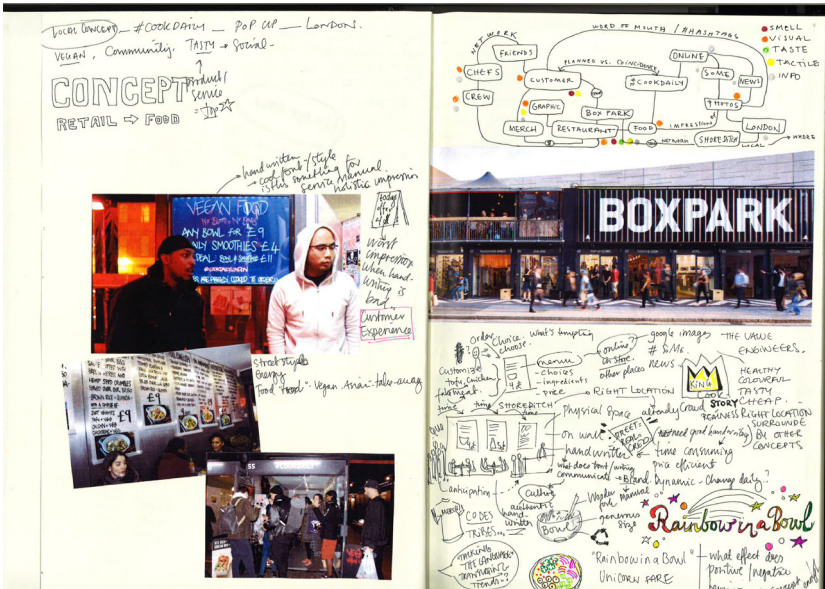
Figure 3.18 – Mixed media trend-exploration. Hand sketching, assemblies of printed material and quick service journeys assisted in identifying contemporary practices and core aspects of experiential features, which were brought further into the ideational process. (Dennington, C., 2017).

Figure 3.19 – Curating popular cultural material. Magazine cutouts and printed images were arranged and assembled to identify patterns of emerging trends, meaning and practices, together with notating to assist in the semantic transformation. (Dennington, C., 2018).

I was also provided access to professional trend resources through the partnering company that I used to assemble and synthesize a collection of trends that I used as a framework for the student's investigations. The design results were a series of services that promoted more sustainable fashion practices beyond a product focus, including a branded summer camp (Pippich, M., 2017) and a service that connected different commercial fashion actors, the public and organizations to co-create better alternatives for the industry (Freitas, T., 2017). The findings from this second design inquiry resulted in Publication 2, where some examples of resulting concepts are also presented and further discussed.

3.6.4.1 Translator and curator of meaning

This design exploration shed light on my intermediary role as a practitioner in curating the cultural resources, and through the translation of cultural material into specific service details. I took on a curatorial role by gathering, selecting, ordering and displaying images from popular cultural resources, such as magazines, online image repositories, and print material, and assembling these in moodboards (Figure 3.17 p. 85). In reflection it became apparent to me how this was used as a means to communicate meaning, to juxtapose and co-articulate units of information and their relations (Bench, 2018), and additionally created an archive of popular cultural semiotics (Rossolatos, 2014). This physical interaction with cultural resources can be seen in light of Schön's (1983) notion of physical and tactile conversation with materials, in this instance, popular cultural materials. To me, as a former practitioner within the fashion industry, I found that trend transformation and meaning conveyance, was part of an intuitive process rooted in my former experience and personal cultural repository.

However, when working through the *Trendslation* approach with the students, it became apparent how challenging the transformation from trend to meaning was. In part, this was due to the concept of "meaning" being hard for the students to fully comprehend, but also to the fact that the synthesis and conveyance of meaning is formed through a highly intuitive process. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, I observed how the students that were trained in visual communication showed a higher level of success in identifying and communicating their interpretation of meaning, and were also more successful in pulling their design work further into more holistic and stylistically consistent conceptual designs. This also resulted in more precise feedback from the partnering brand, which allowed for the service concepts to develop more fully. I found that by discussing, writing short

value statements and carefully curating visual material, the interpretation of meaning became more manifest. I identified this first step as scan and understand, and entailed identification and exploration of trends, and the 'extraction' of meaning.

My own work, as well as the student work, showed how the communication of meaning became paramount through visually rich images, sketches and prototypes. Sketching is viewed as an integral part of design, as it can reveal design solutions, recognize conflicts and possibilities, as well as revise and refine ideas, generate concepts and facilitate problem solving (Bilda & Demirkan, 2003; Do et al., 2000). In the second transformation loop, rather than solely hand sketching, I developed an approach of quick "concept sketches" that contained a mix of media including collages, mappings, text, short storyboards, concept name and simplified customer journeys. This was then introduced to the students to allow for rapid production of more immediate conveyance of insights, ideas and service aspects to other designers, non-designers and partners (Segelström, 2010). I noticed how the service concepts developed more holistically through visualization, and the sketches allowed me to identify and reflect upon critical and influential design details (Cross, 2006). This semantic transformation was identified as conceptualize, where the underlying meanings behind the trends were used to ideate new offerings.

By analyzing my own and student work I realized how in the further development of the service concepts key touch-points could be designed to enhance the intended meaning through their cultural alignment, and aesthetic and stylistic detailing. I also found that this showed the potential of cultural touch-points as signifiers of cultural capital. This final stage of transformation was labelled implement, where the identified meaning was used to design and prototype touch-points.

3.6.4.2 Shaping Trendslation

This second design exploration initiated me to develop a more systemized approach to the semantic transformation of cultural trends into service concepts and details through the identification of three proccessual stages. It further shed light on how popular cultural material, like magazines, websites, social media posts, art exhibitions, movies, and music, could be actively used in locating and identifying contemporary cultural meaning. This physical intervention with multimodal material contributed to materialize meaning through the designer's selection and curation. As services cannot

be represented as easily as products, due to services consisting of a chain of actions (Segelström, 2010), the concept sketching was also used to communicate the insights to the partners.

I discovered how shaping and following the three steps enabled a more in depth investigation into how such translation of trends could be adopted by, and adjusted to Service Design. The design results indicated that the approach showed promise and potential towards popular cultural orientation of Service Design. It showed that a triple-staged semantic transformation could provide an initial framework for considering trends as innovation material in the early phases of Service Design projects. It further prompted questions and insights into the service designer's role in a fuller cultural view of Service Design, and increased awareness of the service designer's mediating and meaning-making role. The findings also pointed towards the influential potential of trends in shaping innovation through the service offering and touch-point, and the need to develop a more practical tool to assist in the semantic transformation process.

3.6.5 Design exploration #3

The third design exploration was carried out in 2018 (January – May) together with the global sports and lifestyle brand (P3). In this project I spent time abroad, embedded in the design team of the brand as a situated designer-practitioner, yet my design work was highly individual, as the project was part of my research, and not part of any ongoing design projects within the company. Throughout this design exploration the broader semantic turn to meaning was drawn upon by way of operationalizing the Trendslation approach, in terms of cultural experience, expression and enactment. It also inquired into the identified need for a practical tool to assist in the design process. The selected trends in this exploration were based on insight from the brands marketing team.

This design exploration was also partly executed in collaboration with 11 Master's students as part of my research teaching term through the module Trendslation in the Service Design 2 course at AHO (March – May). The students' main role was to further operationalize the approach to design conceptual service solutions for the partner. In addition to the identified trends, future material trends were also introduced to the students, and a slight future aspect working towards 2025. The final results were presented for the partner, and displayed at the AHO Works exhibition (2018, June).

3.6.5.1 Re-shaping Trendslation

In this third design exploration I followed the structured *Trendslation* approach of the three identified phases, as well as providing this as a framing for the student brief. This cast light on my curatorial role when intervening and selecting sources of cultural input to prompt further exploration of the cultural terrain of the identified user, by adopting what I recognized as an intermediary role in curating visual representations as signifiers. This I found could convey the intended meaning, generated through cultural signs (Barker & Jane, 2016).

Santamaria et al. (2018) write how the designer needs the ability to navigate the cultural context of the user, to design innovative solutions that are perceived as relevant and desirable. By expanding the moodboard within my own practice, as described in Publication 2, and developing experience and trend-focused boards, I could simultaneously visually explore the users cultural context, as well as developing a foundation for a certain service style. This was introduced to the students through a workshop, where I observed how several of the students also added short texts, conveying what I analytically read as representations of the service tone-of-voice. This was included as an experiential factor in the development of such service-specific experience boards (Figure 3.20 & 3.21, p. 104).

Karjalainen (2004, p. 239) draws forward the moodboard as an important tool for the semantic transformation in product design to communicate "the central issues of product character". Through analysis of the design work it became clear to me how there was a need to also focus on the central issues of service character, including experiential factors in service design. The experiential moodboards that I had designed revealed how rich associations could be provoked through using cultural codes and symbolic signifiers of the intended user's context, practices, products and aesthetic preferences in light of identified trends. It also includes service specific stylistic details, such as tone-of-voice. This shaped a foundation for the further semantic translation.

When observing the students I gained insight into how these experience, brand and trend focused boards assisted the students to explore, interpret and communicate meaning, providing a foundation for the extraction and translation into trend 'DNA'. The boards also functioned as prompts for ideation, and to build a foundation for the service style. Trends were, in this sense, used to guide design decisions, to anticipate future needs and values, and to evoke ideation and conceptualization.

3.20 – Example of a student made experiential board. The boards were extended beyond the format of the mood board to include service specific details, such as tone of voice, and visual representations of cultural practices. (Dudani, P., 2018). Photo by author.

3.21 – Example of a student made experiential board. The boards were extended beyond the format of the mood board to include service specific details, such as tone of voice, and visual representations of cultural practices. (Byskov, K., 2018). Photo by author.

3.6.5.2 Developing a practical tool for conveying an experiential journey

To explore the potentials of developing an assisting tool to help design and communicate the stylistic and cultural orientation of the service designs more fully, in this exploration I developed the stylistic service journey. This could be seen as a crossover between the traditional service journey and a moodboard, offering a more 'emotional' elicitation of the desired service experience. Through the development of such stylized journeys, it became apparent how the core offering of a service could persist in the development of several versions of the same service, while the experiential aspects of the service encounters shifted by utilizing specific and curated cultural representations, signifying different meanings (see Publications 3 and 4).

In the further development of the service design concepts in my practice, the need for a fuller and more structured journey representation that could convey the intended experience, became apparent to me. This led to my development of the experience-centric service journey based on similar principles as the stylistic journey; a service journey centered on trend-aligned experiential factors. The experience focused service journey assisted me in conveying and communicating a curated experience over time, by adding signifiers of cultural codes (Santamaria et al., 2018), resulting in the development of more holistic, stylistic and experiential design solutions. It became clear that this tool could additionally function as a co-creative and strategic innovation tool for businesses, as it offers a mode for shared interpretation. For a fuller description of this tool see Publication 4. Examples of the experience-centric service journey can be seen in the exemplification of Trendslation later in this chapter.

3.6.5.3 Designing culturally informed touch-points

In Publication 4 I contemplated the notion of experiential elements as service specific elements, as an additional concept to touch-points. These elements included, for example, sensory, symbolic, gestural, time-based and spatial details. My initial observation was how such experiential elements could assist in reinforcing and altering the experience. Rather than developing this notion further, I concluded on these aspects as being culturally informed touch-points. I describe these as touch-points that are curated or designed "to reflect contemporary culture, and that denote intrinsic meaning through their aesthetic and stylistic characteristics" (Dennington, 2019). Such touch-points can be designed specifically with the aim to convey cultural capital, which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

3.6.5.4 Refining Trendslation

This third design exploration took a more directed approach to the three stages of semantic transformation. In this, I found that the identification and construction of meaning further prompted the shaping of new conceptual services that promoted new cultural practices, stimulating the consumption and production of new meaning. This pointed towards the service designer's cultural intermediary position as a translator of cultural trends, in shaping design innovation through the embodiment of semantic characteristics in service design.

This exploration additionally revealed how the representation of stylistic and aesthetic characteristics could capture and communicate experiential factors of the service. I identified how this included key touch-points, service personality and tone-of-voice, and time-based, audio and tactile elements. It further also included behavioural elements. I realized how when designing for services within cultural and consumer-oriented domains and contexts key touch-points and other experience-based elements can be visualized throughout the service journey, to convey and communicate a curated experience over time. This entails communicating cultural expressions, like practices and products, in the sociocultural context of the user, which is due to the culturally rich and diverse experience and expertise of the service designer.
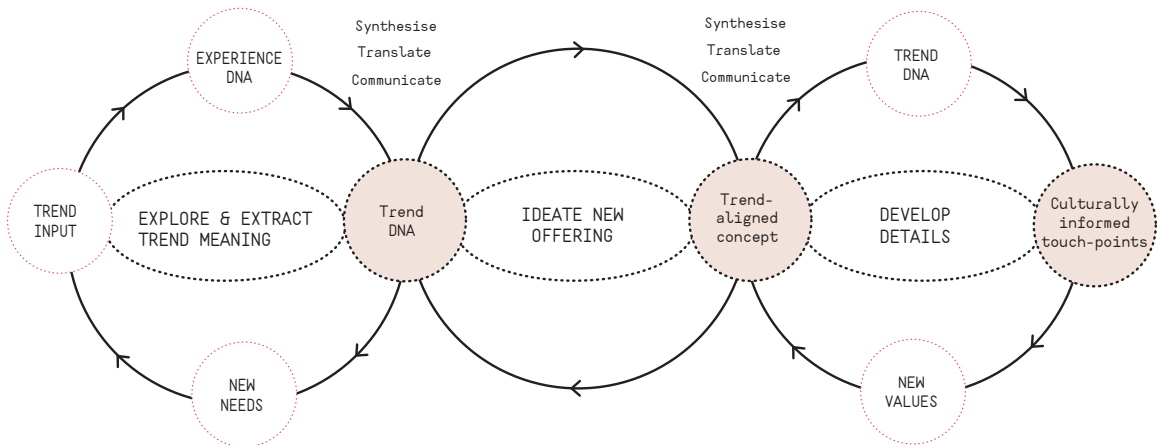
Figure 3.22 – A Model of the Trendslation approach. (Dennington, C., 2019).

The final conceptual model of the *Trendslation* process, as seen in Figure 3.22, offers a more structured approach for the service designer to follow. Implementing the notion of trends as material is new to Service Design, and following similar processes to those found in the commercial world of fashion and product design, such loops of interpretation, translation, synthesis and communication of meaning showed positive results in both my own, and the student design work for P3. It offered assistance in designing conceptual service designs that offered new ways to think about experiential encounters that were not solely focused on the product, but rather saw the product as a key touch-point existing within a service ecology.

3.6.6 Exemplifying the Trendslation approach

To briefly illustrate the stages of *Trendslation*, I will use a case example of the conceptual service *Remix*, which is one of the design results from the third design exploration. The service design idea and conceptual work are results of my design practice, while collaborating with graphic designer Daniel Nergaard on developing the graphic profile. *Remix* is described in publications 3 and 4, and used as an analytical framing in Chapter 4.

Remix is a service that enables users to remake and resell the partnering brands pre-owned fashion items. The service also provides a platform for users to co-create and co-curate editorial, educational and inspirational content within lifestyle, urban sports and street culture (Figure 3.23). The trends that influenced the development of *Remix* concerned notions of the fluid and dynamic social, creative and professional roles of the target user identified as creative individuals, as well as trends related to practices of hacking and making. By exploring current cultural codes, expressions and style, curated images in a visually rich and semantically coded experience board framed meaning by "materializing" it to extract and describe the trend DNA (Figure 3.24). The cultural context of the users in light of the trends was investigated through new practices related to DIY culture and the deconstruction and reconstruction of brands. Together this outlines the first semantic transformation that the service designer activates.

The second transformation loop was activated through using the trend 'essence' and meaning that was identified in the first step, to ideate new offerings through quick visual and design-rich concept sketches that communicated the experiential aspects including a service title, a short explanatory text in selected tone-of-voice, together with visual representations, mockups of key touchpoints and simplified journeys to convey the intended meaning (see examples in Publication 4).

The service offering and experience was further ideated and developed by using the experience-centric service journey to map out key touch-points, encounters and interactions across time. Figures 3.25 - 3.26 show two versions of the experience-centric journey from my work with developing *Remix*. Additional service ideas surfaced throughout the process of drawing up these journeys, for example new offerings in the 'after' phase.

The third and final semantic transformation is of the service designer's translation and communication of meaning through the design of culturally aligned and informed touch-points that enhance the experiential. In prototyping *Remix*, touch-points and their interactions were, amongst other, evidenced through interface mock-ups. Figure 3.27 shows an example of an interface of the online Shop section, were bikes and boards could be rented, and city bike tours could be booked. Figure 3.28 shows an example of an information pamphlet in the form of a fanzine that was designed to enhance the cultural and meaningful aspects of *Remix*. The overall style through choice of font, images, tone-of-voice and content reflected the overall 'Remix experience'. Publication 3 and 4 describe this in more detail.
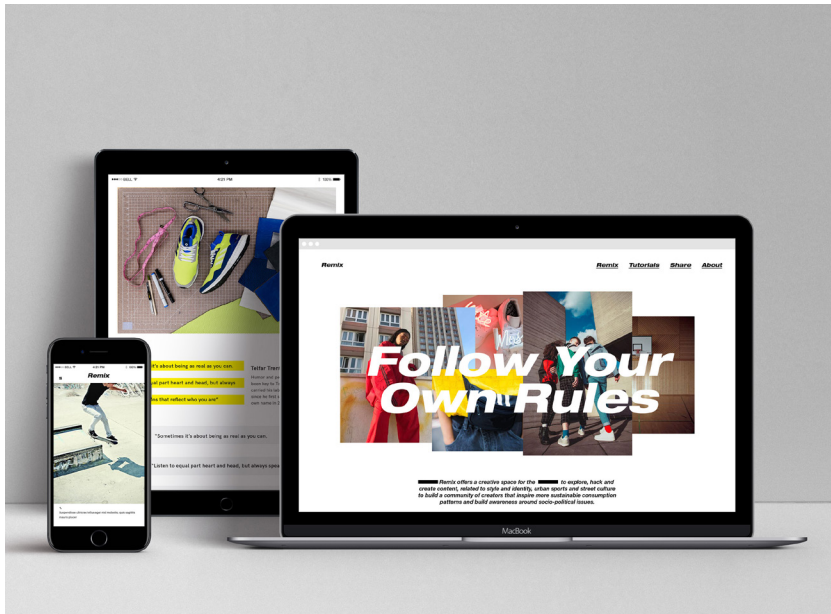
Figure 3.23 – Cross-platform experiential touchpoints and interfaces of *Remix*. (Dennington, C. & Nergaard, D., 2018).
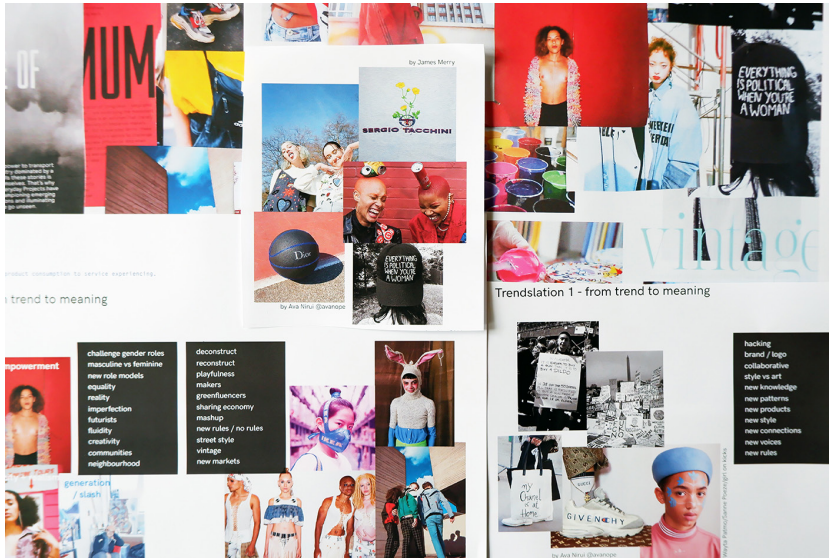
3.24 – Excerpt from an experiential board that was designed to help identify the underlying meaning of the selected trends, in light of the intended user, popular cultural codes and new practices. (Dennington, C., 2018).
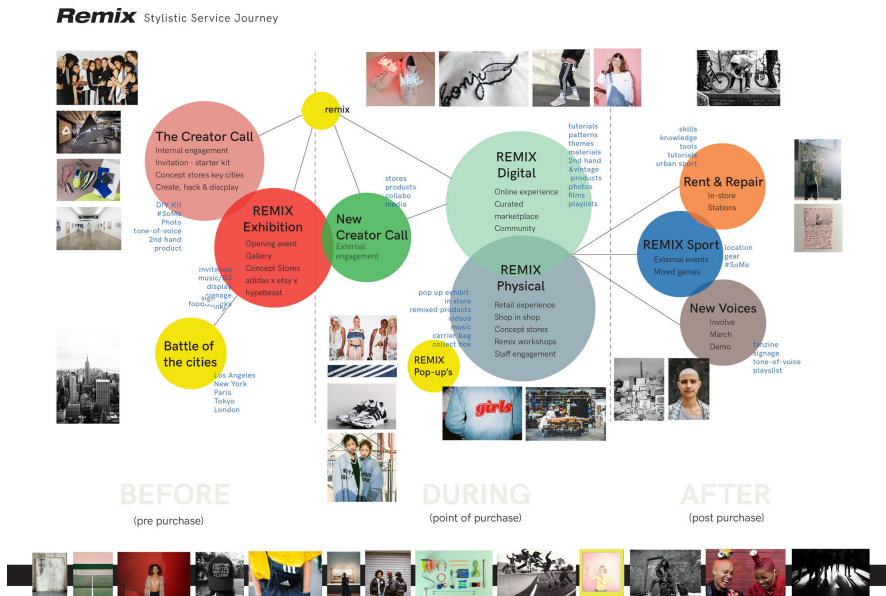
3.25 – Example 1 of *Remix* experience-centric service journey. (Dennington, C., 2018).
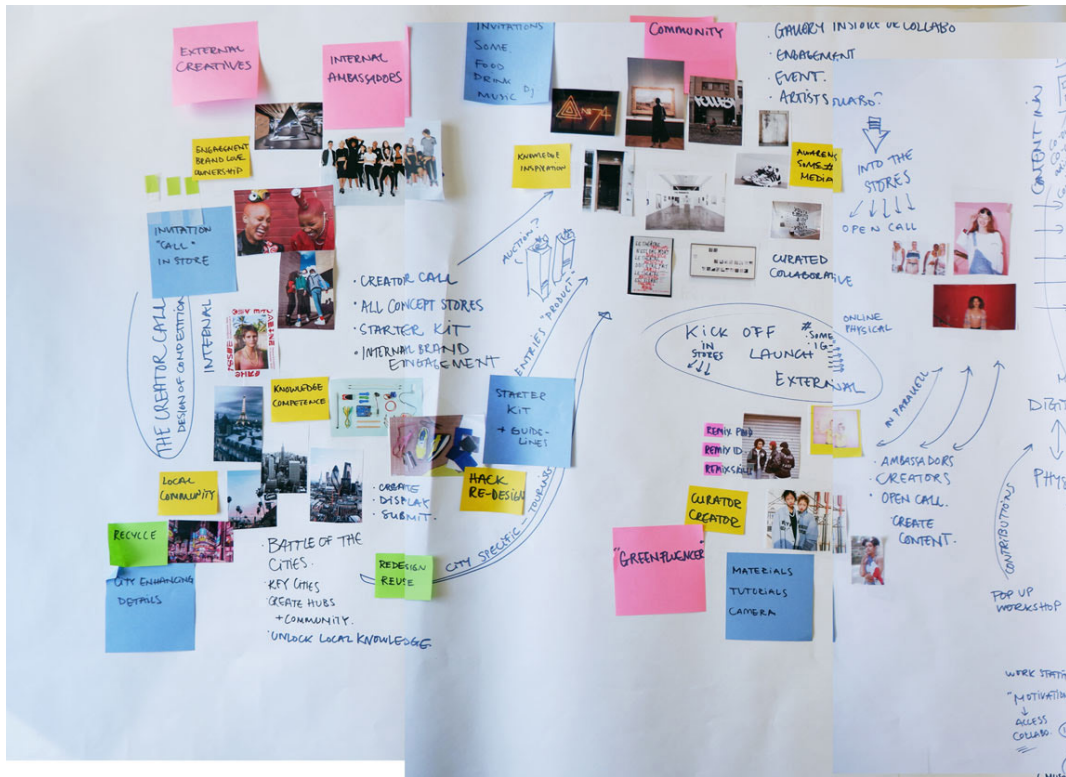
3.26 – Example 2 of *Remix* experience-centric service journey. This version shows a mix of notes, assemblies of images, and annotations. (Dennington, C., 2018).
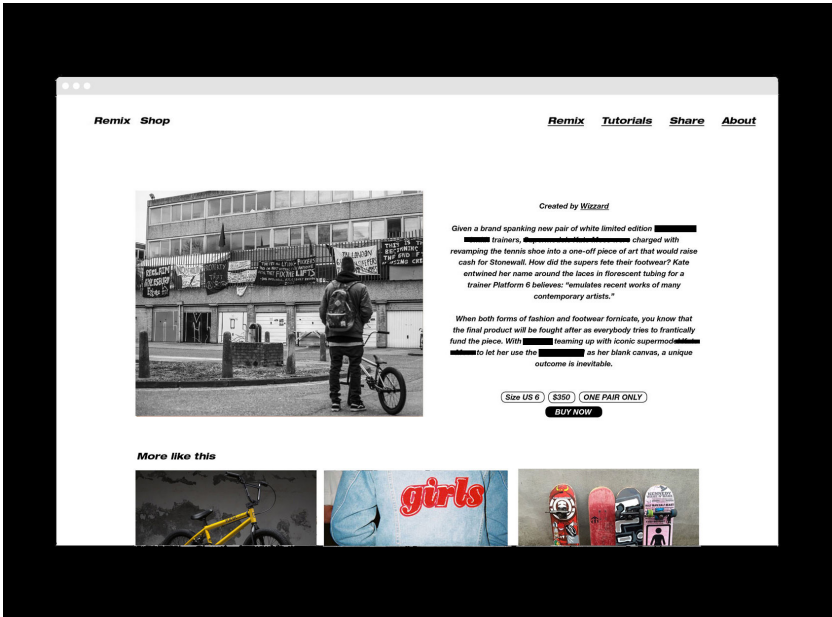
Figure 3.27 – Example of a Remix service interface that conveys the experiential character. (Dennington, C. & Nergaard, D., 2018). The main image seen in this website mockup is from Endless Magazine (Goodyear, T., 2016).

Figure 3.28 – Example of a culturally informed touch-point as a fanzine-like informational pamphlet. (Dennington, C. & Nergaard, D., 2018).

3.7 Reflections on the Trendslation approach

3.7.1 An indicative move forward

The *Trendslation* approach as described in Publication 3 and 4, and outlined through the last section, suggests one possible way forward in the design of content rich, experientially consistent and culturally located service designs. There are of course limitations to an early approach, such as the suggested Trendslation, and it is not to be viewed as one fixed and final answer. Rather it should be viewed as an indicative and suggestive way forward in which Service Design can become more culturally reflexive and responsive. In this section I highlight some key issues.

First and foremost, I believe that following the suggested triple-staged semantic transformation has offered a useful way of bringing forward findings and insights that have contributed to shape a popular cultural view of Service Design. This finding in itself has perhaps taken a space of more interest and importance then the actual act and process of 'trendslating'. Arriving at the positioning that I describe in the following chapter would not have been possible without taking into account the designers interpretation, synthesis and translation of meaning. Still, the notion of such a semantic transformation could be both challenged and expanded.

In a retrospective view, the semantic transformation has perhaps taken the shape as a departure point to "think from", and for building a foundation for a cultural view of Service Design, rather than being foregrounded as an absolute towards the design of culturally located services. Karjalainen's model offers a valuable framing for product design, as described in Chapter 2. The notion of product semantics, and the transformation process of intangible values to tangible products, offers valuable insight into the designers' mastery of the symbolic dimensions of products (Karjalainen, 2004). This does not include the transformation into non-physical or service specific detailing and characteristics, though.

I question whether the triple-staged semantic transformation that I account for comes to short, as it becomes apparent how throughout the service designers' interpretation and translation several levels of meaning come into play, through the physical and digital, to the immaterial and symbolic. This could suggest a move towards a more layered approach, where each stage addresses several layers of meaning. Further, to include not just a semantic, but also a socio-semiotic translation, as services are used, experienced and enacted.

On a practical note, following such a step-by-step process offered key insights into the practicality of transformation. One general observation throughout the two latter explorations was that a significant part of the students lacked first-hand experience with such visual interpretation and communication, unless their background was within visual communication. Open-ended interviews with students supported this finding, with many mentioning the experiential board as something they would bring into their further practice. One student reflection noted how she appreciated the making of the board, as "It allowed me to understand my own thought process by letting me choose images and look for patterns". I believe these observations and insights point toward how visual and experiential tools and techniques that express the emotive and meaningful, can be as significant in Service Design as they are in other design domains, especially when operating in the consumer market. It also indicates that a high level of aesthetic and visual skills can be useful for service designers designing in the cultural sphere. I further discuss this in Chapter 5.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the final approach has only been fully operationalized through one design exploration, together with P3 and 11 students, and would benefit from further testing and development. The approach was also developed through, and for commercial contexts and may be best suited for Service Design in business- and consumer related domains. However, some first stage introduction to public services have been executed, which has brought upon some questions that I discuss in Chapter 5.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has consisted of two main parts. In the first part I have drawn up the action research methodology and overall research through design mode that has been applied to inquire into the interdisciplinary areas and cross-sections between experiential and meaning-constructing aspects of Service Design and concepts from popular culture, across practice and research. This has entailed engaging my situated knowledge in a reflexive mode of practice in three experimental design-driven inquiries with business partners. Reflections on and in the making of conceptual service design artefacts have informed my development of the experiential approach *Trendslation*.

Observations and analysis of the design processes and work of 17 Master's students that have operationalized the approach have offered multiple views and insight into the triple-semantic transformation of trends to service design.

This chapter has further addressed the multiple linked, yet different, roles I have adopted as a practitioner, educator and researcher, and accounts for the qualitative mixed methods that I have applied to expose 'multiple ways of seeing', and that have enabled visual and exploratory ways of thinking and reflecting in action. The conceptual and empirical data that have surfaced through this mix of methods have been presented, before research rigour and bias are reflected upon.

The second part of this chapter has drawn up accounts of the three design inquiries, in which the main insights, concepts and key findings that have surfaced in the space between developing, designing, teaching and activating the *Trendslation* approach have been brought forward. It has further highlighted the culturally intermediary role of the service designer, and described the development of the experience-centric service journey. Finally, the process of *Trendslation* has been exemplified through the case example *Remix*. The chapter closes with some reflections upon the approach.

In the following chapter I draw up connections between Service Design and concepts from popular culture shaped through this research-led design work. In several sections of Chapter 4 I refer back to the case example of *Remix*, as a conceptual service example, to further analyze and describe the popular cultural meanings and mechanisms that I have found come into play through both the design and imagined use of this service.

Chapter 4 Connecting Service Design and Popular Culture

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Shaping a transdisciplinary view

Following the design research work and practice as described in Chapter 3 my aim for this chapter is to further develop connections between Service Design and concepts and practices from popular culture. I pose how the service designer can design culturally located services by way of the uptake of trends as innovation material by activating a triple-staged semantic transformation through the experiential approach of *Trendslation*. I further imply a developing role of the service designer as a cultural intermediary when moving between practice and popular cultural constructs. In light of these notions and findings that have surfaced through my research-led practice, I propose that services that are culturally located, informed and practiced can be seen as popular cultural constructs in their own right. Seen through these views I have arrived at one distinctive concept - Popular Cultural Service Design - that I wish to pull forward in this chapter. This concept draws a connection between Service Design and Popular Culture, that is further explored through six key concepts that I introduce in the following section.

My main goal for this chapter is to more fully frame what I suggest is an emergent and potentially important new intersection between Service Design and concepts from design, popular culture and business. In doing so, I seek to ignite a cross-disciplinary conversation that highlights an area that seems ripe for discussion. I see this cross-disciplinary connection as an overarching outcome in this Exegesis. To do this I draw on my related four Publications and look more deeply at some of the wider aspects of popular and consumer culture in relation to the expansion of Service Design beyond earlier

locations, influentially, but also perhaps somewhat restrictively, as what regards engagement, experience and performance within design management and marketing. I see a role for culturally informed views on Service Design, together with explorations of the field's cultural articulation in business, via users, in and as experience. I offer a transdisciplinary informed view of Service Design as culturally sensitive and reflexive through mediated service interactions that convey meaning, and of the contributions of the service designer in shaping such meaning. This may help the field to be more fully positioned and understood with respect to its roles and influence as a bearer of cultural enactment, values and experience.

4.1.2 On six key concepts in a cultural view on Service Design

Following through the individual publications I have established that a contemporary cultural view up until now has been lacking in both Service Design discourse and in practice. I have found this quite surprising, as certainly services are increasingly embedded in our everyday cultural lives, influencing the ways in which we use, consume and share popular expressions and experiences. In the entanglement between people, products, media, technologies, interactions, systems and practices that shape service encounters and experiences, culture is also formed. What I find missing then, is a bridge between Service Design and concepts from culture that can position us better to reflect upon the cultural impact, relevance, influences, and agency Service Design and the service designer may play in contemporary culture. In this chapter I seek to address this gap.

In addressing the conceptual theme of Popular Cultural Service Design I wish to pull forward six key concepts that I entitle as:

1) Popular Cultural Services
2) Popular Cultural Service Experience
3) Trend-Driven Service Design
4) The Experience-centric Service Journey
5) Designing for Cultural Service Design and Value
6) Service Design Cultural Intermediaries

What I wish to highlight through these six concepts is an expanding understanding of the role of Service Design, and the service designer, in a popular cultural and trend-driven framing, and of how the field and practice may adjust, align and advance to new roles and relations in line with cultural and experiential domains that it is expanding into.

4.1.3 A visual guide to transdisciplinary connections

In closing Chapter 2, I illustrated the analytical lift brought forward from the literature review and into the design-research practice (Figure 2.4 p. 57). Figure 4.1 below shows the extracted cross-section that places and unpacks the concept of Popular Cultural Service Design. Figure 4.2 on the following page illustrates the six distinct concepts that I detail throughout this chapter.
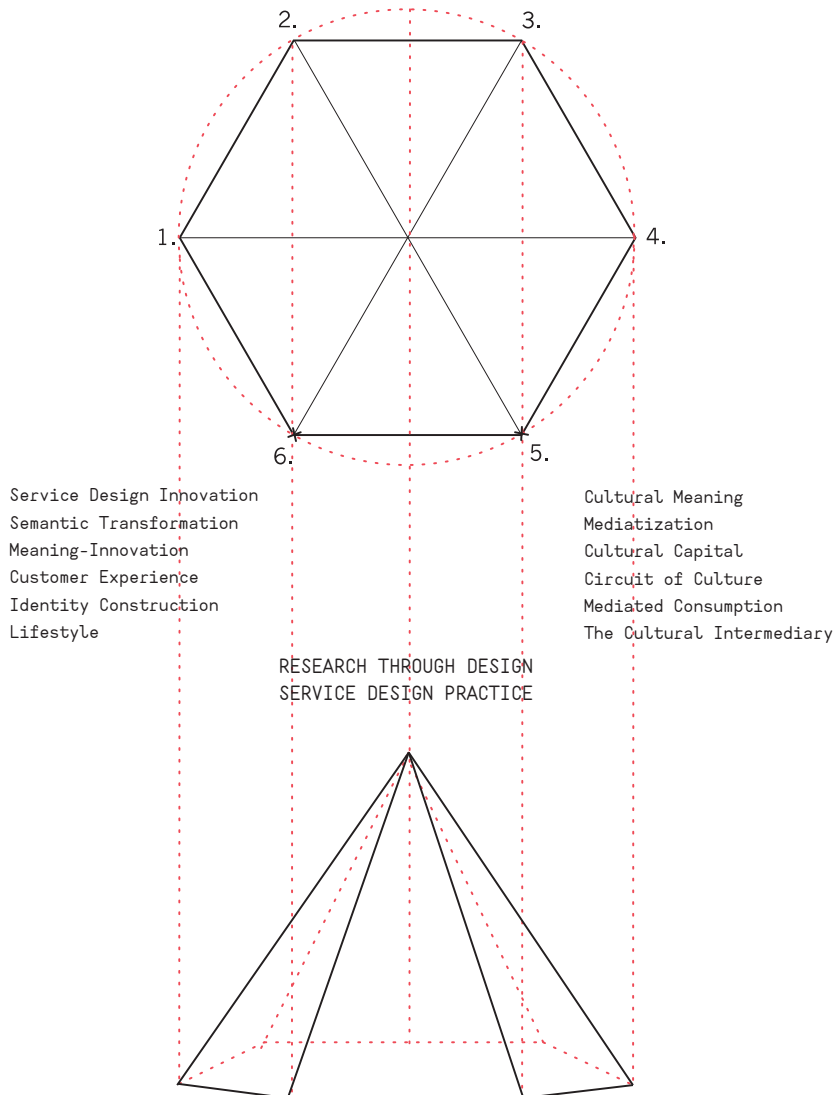
Figure 4.1 – Illustrating the analytical lift that frames the identified thematic concept of Popular Cultural Service Design, joined up by six concepts (Dennington, C., 2020).

trend-driven
service design

3.

2.

popular cultural
service experience

4.

the experience-
centric service journey

POPULAR CULTURAL SERVICE DESIGN

popular cultural
services

designing for cultural
service design & value

1.

5.

6.

service design
cultural intermediaries
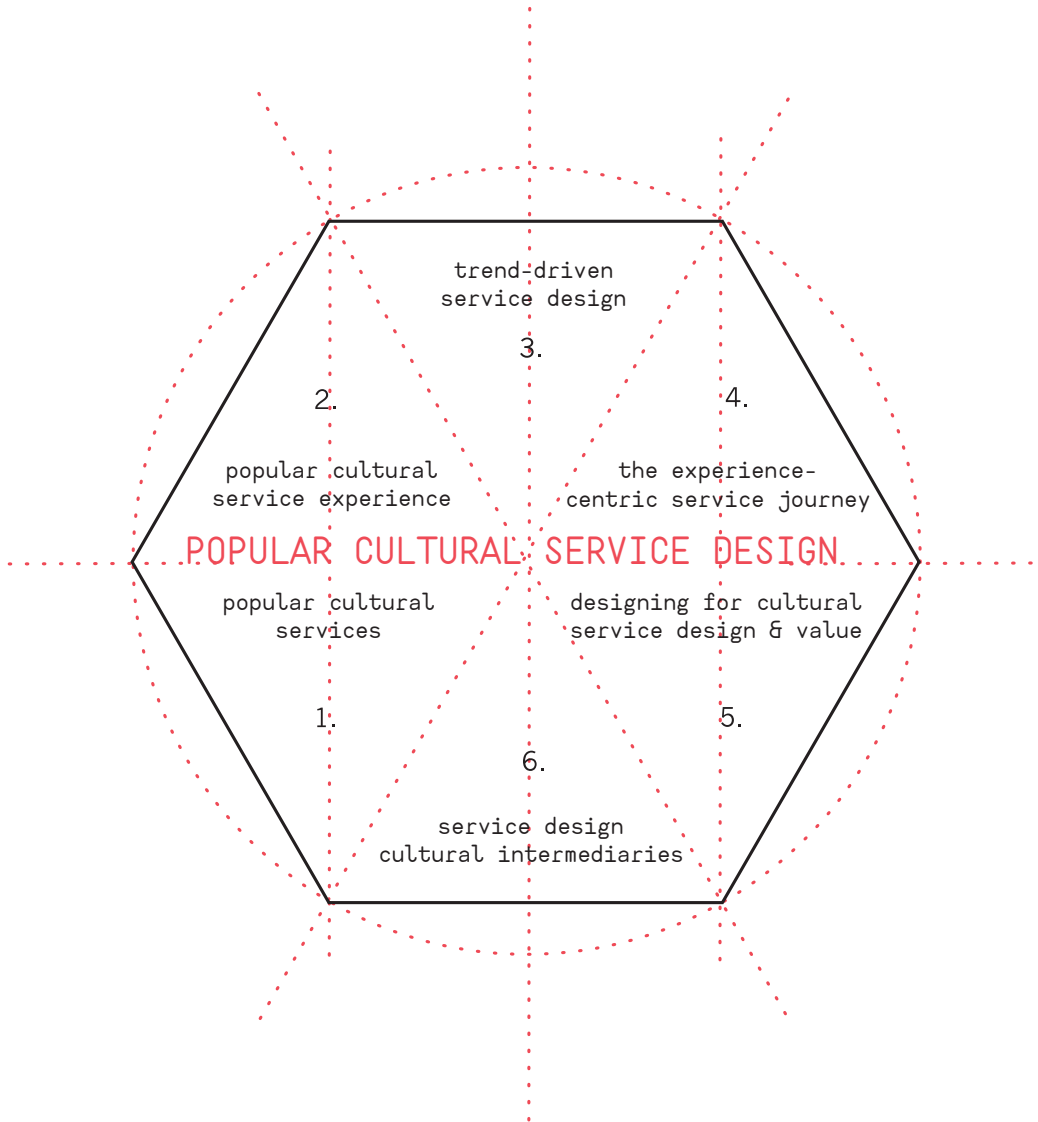
Figure 4.2 – Six concepts of Popular Cultural Service Design (Dennington, C., 2020).

4.1.4 Toward a 'cultural model of Service Design'

This chapter offers an infrastructure that draws together these six key concepts and directions, insights from practice and relations to changing conditions of the popular cultural landscape services exist within, towards a transdisciplinary cultural model of Service Design. I frame a view of popular cultural service experiences to better grasp the experiential terrain that the service designer is operating within when working in domains connected with consumer lifestyles. I do this by looking to experience-centric constructs within the business of fashion, and the dynamic interplay between cultural materials, meaning and media in shaping popular experiences. I further highlight connections between the service experiential and popular cultural practices, and the increased linkage of services, interactions, systems and artefacts. Following this, I discuss a trend-driven Service Design view, the practice-oriented Trendslation, and the experience-centric service journey. This foregrounding of culture in Service Design lifts a perspective of service design cultural intermediaries.

Next, I turn to the six core concepts that I have developed, trialed and abstracted from a merge of the literature review, methods enacted and service experiential design works developed.

4.2. Concept #1: On popular cultural services

4.2.1 Service as culturally aligned

In Chapter 3 I presented three business located service design explorations that have been executed by way of a design driven research mode of inquiry. The design results, insights, and data from these explorations, together with my observations as accounted for in Chapter 1 and 2, indicate that culturally aligned and located services can be viewed as popular cultural constructs in their own right, in their dynamic interplay of popular meaning and value.

Services today are enabling and creating new cultural intersections between design, technology, people, places, new media, and popular practices. Our daily lives are affected by the use and experiences of services that are more cultural than transactional, and that are influencing and shaping new lifestyles and cultural identities. Design cultures today, as described by Julier and Munch (2019), are being shaped between connections and networks of products, publics, places and practices, and as such, I contemplate how surely services are in the midst of shaping such design cultures?

Storey (2018) presents popular culture as the entanglement of meaning, materiality and social practices of our everyday lives. Today, more then ever perhaps, services and service constructs can be seen as significant contributors to this entanglement. Services are influencing popular culture, at a direct level like shaping new popular practices, such as how we consume both products and media, or by enabling new modes of mobility. In addition, services today are impacting popular culture socially and symbolically, like with the introduction of new gestures ("swipe right, double tap") and modes of engagement and communication ("like, emoji, share"). Services are also influencing other popular cultural expressions seen in the uptake and representation of services in areas of popular media like music, literature and art, constructing webs of symbolic meaning.

Connections to popular culture have been described in interconnecting fields to Service Design. In Interaction Design, for example, Einar Martinussen (2015) brings forward the potentials of design in negotiating and translating between popular culture and emerging technologies. Media perspectives present media as highly influential in popular cultural terms, as new media formats are shaped by new technology, contemporary social relationships and cultural forms, also playing a significant role in distributing popular culture (Grossberg et al., 2006). As I describe in the following sections, services exist in this mesh of products, interactions, media and popular culture, yet, Service Design has not initiated the drawing up of similar connections.

In Chapter 2, I paid attention to views that characterized designed products as meaningful, emotional and symbolic due to their uptake of cultural influence and conveyance of meaning. Press and Cooper (2003) emphasize the designers' role in 'making culture' through designed artefacts that convey meaning by their cultural alignment, while Verganti (2009, p. 36) describes how "meanings result from interaction between user and product". du Gay et al. (2013) introduce views of the significant role of the designer, the designed artefact and its use, in such dynamic interplay of cultural meaning, and Julier (2000) notes how the form and aesthetics of objects can contribute in conveying intrinsic meaning.

Taking these above views into account, can we not then surely talk about popular cultural and meaningful Service Design, in how its offerings, touch-points, experiences and encounters can be perceived as emotional and symbolic, and embedded with meaning? As noted in Chapter 2, Julier describes the Alessi Juicy Salif lemon squeezer as an object that in addition to having functional value, just as well could be displayed on the living room

shelf, as an object of admiration and desire. My question is then, how can Service Design offer "living room shelf service experiences", so to speak? With this I mean, how can the service designer design for meaningful and desirable services that customers not only have to use, but want to use?

4.2.2 'Fashioning' experiences

To look closer into what may constitute such "desirable" service experiences in a contemporary context, I find the fashion domain interesting, as "the prime purpose of fashion brands has been, and for the most part continues to be, the production of desirable objects" (Beard, p. 75). Still, fashion itself is not only seen in light of apparel as commodities existing 'in a vacuum', rather as objects to be experienced, in which fashion brands and producers are increasingly looking to position its products as experiences (Beard, 2012). Fashion brands can be seen to focus highly on distributed and cross digital and physical experiences, seen through e.g. online shopping vs. physical shop interiors, fashion shows taking place in parallel both physically and digitally, media communication in print and in social media - creating 'fashion experiences' in the intersections between consumption, design, media, technology and popular culture.

Within fashion theory Agnès Rocamora (2017) investigates what she terms the mediatization of fashion, which means "looking at the ways fashion practices have adapted to, and been transformed by, the media. It does not mean focusing on the media themselves, but on the ways people and institutions in the field of fashion have changed their practices for and with the media." (p. 509). This can be seen through, for example how fashion brands design aesthetic and experiential fashion shows, retail interiors, events or clothing collections with the purpose to fit new media formats (Mendes, 2019). This shines light upon how the practices of fashion connected to production, consumption, distribution and diffusion are articulated in an interplay between traditional media formats, such as print, and more increasingly new media, such as social media (Rocamora, 2017).

In addressing fashion media in the era of the social media image-sharing platform Instagram, Synne Skjulstad (2018) addresses the increasing uptake of issues concerning digital media from media and communication studies into fashion studies. Skjulstad uses the case of the coveted French street fashion brand and collective Vetements to highlight how fashion media has taken up contemporary cultures of online participation and distribution to "facilitate user-driven fashion practices, mediated across a mesh of platforms

such as Instagram" (p. 5). Vetements brings aesthetics and practices from contemporary Internet culture into the core of their design practice, and use a variety of strategies to engage users across multiple-platforms in a constant negotiation between mass culture and Internet culture (Skjulstad, 2018). This includes collaborations with, and appropriation of, established brands, and creating engagement with user-generated content via their Instagram account @vetements_official.

Skjulstad notes how "an important reason for the position currently held by Vetements in the fashion industry is closely tied to the brand's digital media practices and articulations of a deep understanding of contemporary digital media culture" (Skjulstad, p. 10). The brand uses notions from commercial fashion brands regarding identity-creation and representation to cater to their users by "designing a social and mediational canvas on to which the audience may perform" (p. 15). This includes the design of stages, scenes and settings in which the user can enact through, and interact with, localized branded experiences with the purpose of global digital distribution.

The Vetements Dry Cleaning Pop Up event, in collaboration with the exclusive store Maxfields is an example of such (Los Angeles, 2017). The brand designed an Instagram-friendly experiential encounter embedded with multiple layers of meaning through the reference of a dry cleaners in a high-end context. Design rich touch-points and detailing enhanced the experiential through e.g. the choice of location, design of interior, packaging, and graphic design, and included the design of an eye-capturing artistic "center-piece", functioning as the perfect backdrop for users to stage themselves in relation to for encaputing images to be shared in social media (Figure 4.3 - 4.5). The event created an array of media attention, with images cast into multiple media channels. "Vetements and Maxfield have created an event which will set images in motion. The potential harvest is a crop of hash-tagged images, adding to the buzzing image population, for which the conditions were co-designed to stage these brands as the very center of attention and activity" (Skjulstad, 2018, p. 13).

This example illuminates how fashion brands design for experiences that display and reference an assemblage of popular cultural meanings, materials and practices. This may entail networks of creative competency, modes of media and experiential details in line with trends, and with references to current cultural movements.

Figure 4.3 – Maxfield and Vetements Dry Cleaning popup (LA, 2017). The design detailing plays on the dry-cleaning experience. The presence of the brand name of Vetements and Maxfield, as well as the designed interior conveys additional meaning that lifts the dry-cleaning experience into the high-end collaborative context. (Maxfieldla, 2017).

Figure 4.4 – Staging the experiential. The artistic display of fashion garments in a gallery-like context conveys several layers of meaning, and sets the stage as an aesthetic backdrop for social media engagement. (Maxfieldla, 2017).

Figure 4.5 – Culturally informed touchpoint from the Dry Cleaning popup. The invitation to the event was posted on Maxfield LA and Vetements Instagram accounts. The design detailing reflects the high-end dry cleaning experience. (Maxfieldla, 2017).

4.2.3 Shaping experiential services

What I wish to bring forward, is my view of such factors being important 'ingredients' in the shaping of experiences that are culturally influenced and located. Design here, impacts the shaping of experiential factors embedded with cultural meaning. This has, for example, sparked terms such as "Instagrammable", with reference to the design of elements and experiences with such high stylistic and aesthetic features that users intuitively want to be associated with, and thus distribute images of these on Instagram (Arnold, 2018, March, 29). The practice of image sharing through inspirational picture-sharing social media platforms can be seen as a driver for aesthetization of the experiential, which makes visible the interplay of popular cultural meaning and experiences, where style and aesthetics become significantly influential.

I have added the example of Vetements as I believe it brings upon interesting and important perspectives of the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted cultural and mediatized landscape services today are operating within, when moving closer into lifestyle domains. It also casts light on the significance of stylistically consistent experiences, where specific styles and aesthetics also become popular cultural expressions in themselves, creating contemporary "looks". Popular cultural service experiences, I suggest, then also entail an understanding of the popular expressions of the time. I return to this notion of popular cultural service experiences in the following section.

In this thesis I have not gone into details of the many aspects of the interplay between branding, social media and engagement as this is certainly better accounted for by scholars within Media and Marketing (e.g. Yan, 2011; Lee et al, 2018). Rather, my point of using the example of Vetements is to highlight, from a Service Design perspective, how popular experiences are increasingly stylized and mediatized, created to fit new media formats to create engagement, enticement and surprise. Such experiential initiatives exist between multiple touch-points, consumption, design, media and aesthetic expressions, and contribute in framing and disseminating popular cultural meaning, values and practices. Together these discussions within fashion and media highlight the changing conditions within which services and the customer experience are increasingly entangled.

4.3 Concept #2: Towards popular cultural service experiences

4.3.1 Highlighting the service experience as cultural

Clatworthy (2019) addresses the topic of experience centricity in his latest book *The Experience-Centric Organization*. The author stresses the need for companies to place the customer experience at the heart of the organization, and throughout every touch-point, encounter and interaction. This way, organizations can deliver desirable services that people use "because it is something they want", as customers are looking for emotional connections through experiences (p. 12). In contributing a chapter on *Trendslation* to this book I propose how such experiences need to be aligned to cultural trends, to be perceived as meaningful and to satisfy needs that customers may not yet have recognized. In Service Design today, perhaps what is then needed, is to expand the customer or service experience towards understandings of what constitutes popular experiences of our time. Such experiences could be framed as *popular cultural service experience*s, which I define as "impressions and emotions left with the user through service interactions informed by popular culture".

This move from product centricity to an experience focus over time is a challenge for many product-focused companies in the fashion and lifestyle industry today, including the partners I have collaborated with. Certainly many fashion brands are exceptional at creating highly experiential encounters, however these are mainly targeted at one specific moment in time in mind, namely the point of purchase. I further pose that companies can position themselves in the market through new service offerings that create value also beyond the point of sale through offering cultural, emotional, experiential, educational or social value. This is also the main topic in Publication 3, where I suggest how bridging Service Design with experiential domains such as fashion can create new synergies of experiential and cultural value over time that can create long lasting customer relationships throughout the product lifecycle. If product focused businesses within lifestyle domains are to look towards motivation and engagement over time, the customer perspective seen in light of the popular needs to be in focus also beyond the point of purchase.

In this sense, I imagine that Service Design can offer brands and businesses way forwards in the transformation from product to experience centricity. What I then find particularly interesting is how such services can prompt better consumption practices, such as introducing reuse or recycling as a

natural part of the service experiential journey (Dennington, 2018). Service Design can offer experiential approaches and tools that assist in designing for services that are perceived as desirable and meaningful to prompt new cultural practices. In this thesis I propose that operationalizing the Trendslation approach, and by introducing the experience-centric service journey could assist in designing services that move beyond mere product focus and into new experiential opportunities. There can of course be many alternative ways forward for such, my point is that a more culturally sensitive service design practice can offer means to understand and encourage engagement over time, where the point of purchase is seen as one part of a total journey. Also how such trend-aligned efforts can contribute in shaping popular cultural service experiences that evoke contemporary resonance.

4.3.2 Exemplifying a popular cultural service experience

I will use the conceptual service *Remix* presented in Chapter 3, as an example, as it is illustrates a service that entails an assemblage of popular cultural materials, codes, products, references and practices. For one, the name of the service reflects the main objective of the core service offering, which is a platform that promotes the making of "new" products, by offering tools and educational content that enable the remaking of pre-worn fashion apparel and shoes. In this sense, the users are encouraged to "remix" products, as an alternative to buying new. Both the name, and the act of making, references the remix-culture, made popular through the music genre of hip hop, referring to the practice of taking samples (cutting out pieces) of existing material, such as from a musical piece and reproducing these into new musical compositions (Navas, 2014). As a cultural concept "Remix thrives on the relentless combination of all things possible" (Navas, 2014, p. 6), and is much built upon experimentation and appropriation. The service name outlines the service offering itself, and its connection to the identified popular practices of the core users for this conceptual service, of deconstruction, experimentation and appropriation of existing brands to form customized items that signify new meaning (Figure 4.6).

Secondly, the remaking of products can also be seen in relation to a larger movement of DIY (Do-it-yourself) culture that has found its way into areas of fashion and design. Paul Atkinson (2006) draws historical lines from a post-industrialization movement, through the aftermath of World War 2, in accounting for the counter-action of 'making do' with the means and materials at hand, derived by necessity, and of resource scarcity. Today DIY practices can be seen as a counter-act to an over commercialized and

consumption focused industry. "The involvement in the creation of goods in order to derive personal meaning has become increasingly important to many in an age of mass-consumption" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 7). This allows consumers to actively engage creatively in design processes and co-production that "enhance people's notion of themselves as an agent of design rather than merely a passive consumer", "and to express a more individual aesthetic unbounded by the strictures of mass production and passive consumption" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 1). Taking into account such popular practices can prompt the design of services that offer alternative directions to consumption, also from commercial brands.

Another cultural connection that comes apparent in the example of *Remix*, is how the user group is identified as creative individuals, and as co-constructors of popular meanings and practices. These are suggested as people that both work within the brand as employees, or as users that subscribe to the values of the brand. On another level then, a service such as *Remix* ties into the construction of self-image and identity, through creative engagement with material cultures of everyday life. Services can offer popular cultural experiences that promote cultural practices, in which the user enacts as a co-producer, to offer alternative routes forward in the shifting landscape of consumerism. This, I find, brings upon new questions and interesting perspectives regarding possible roles of Service Design to actively contribute to the shaping of popular cultural value and meaning, presented in the following section.

To enhance the popular and experiential, *culturally informed touch-points* can be designed or curated to reflect cultural value. In the example of Remix users are encouraged to create and share content, including guides for re-making, educational or inspirational videos, and social media posts that showcase examples of remixed products. Such touch-points can, in this case, be seen as interfaces that mediate between design and DIY practices (Atkinson, 2006). In this example, these co-created and co-curated touch-points are further interconnected with additional cultural aspects connected to unique city and urban cultures via content linked to street style and street sports, adding an additional layer of cultural meaning. In *Remix* this was ideated as bike tours for viewing street art, interactive maps showcasing the best spots in a city for skateboarding, and branded concepts stores offering the opportunity to rent bikes and skateboards, together with downloadable playlists with music specifically curated to fit the 'aura of the city'.

Figure 4.6 – DIY products and practices. Existing brands have been deconstructed and reassembled to convey new meaning. The luxury fahion brands are appropriated and recontextualized in a street fashion framing. (Nirui, A., 2018).

By using *Remix* as an example, my goal is to illustrate how new services can be embedded with meaning through several service constructs. It also shows the influential interplay between services and popular culture. Services that are culturally located impact culture by way of framing and dissemination of new cultural practices, meaning and value, while the use of such services further impact and influence culture through the new practices and shared meanings that arise. In this, the construction and display of cultural capital becomes a driving factor in these service encounters. I believe that this becomes particularly pertinent for services operating in consumer and lifestyle-oriented domains, such as within fashion, with its focus on experiential, communicative and identity-constructing elements and characteristics. Popular cultural experiences can then perhaps be recognized by multi-layers of embedded meaning through culturally located and informed service offerings, key touch-points, experiential details. This may include the service name and tone-of-voice, and come into play through service interactions and encounters enabled by new technology and new media that promote active engagement amongst users to co-construct new cultural meaning and value.

4.4 Concept #3: Trend-driven Service Design

4.4.1 Trends as innovation material

Following this notion of services as popular cultural constructs that offer popular service experiences, further bears significance for Service Design practice. My view advocates how the service designer, in designing within such dynamic contexts can benefit from greater awareness and sensitivity of trends, to design for services that adapt, extend, and move in line with the dynamics of popular culture. Further this brings upon an awareness of how such services may contribute to set new trends, and by this, casting Service Design further into the dynamics of cultural circulation.

In this section I bring forward my notion of Service Design that reflects a trend sensitive nature. The design explorations revealed how the uptake, and translation of trends as innovation material, has shown successful in supporting more conceptual innovation though practice, and to design for services that show alignment to the *zeitgeist* - an "interpretation of pulses in the spirit of time" that enhances the emotional connections to the user (Campos & Gomez, 2016). Such a view resonates with the focus on the so-called "It-factor" in fashion, referring to the projection of "a kind of allure" that creates attraction (Beard, 2012, p. 68).

Els Dragt (2017, p. 37) describes trends as directions "of change in values and needs which is driven by forces and manifests itself already in various ways within certain groups in society". Raymond Martin (2009) presents trends as part of our emotional, physical and psychological landscape. He further notes how identifying trends can be used to anticipate and understand underlying ideas and principals that shape motivation. As presented through my publications and practice, trends are actively used in the consumer market, as being aware of trends and capable of translating these into contemporary styles can assist in the successful shaping of desirable products that are delivered at the right time (Muir Wood et al., 2008; Pettinger, 2014). The design results from the designs explorations in this study point towards the same potential for the transformation of trends in a Service Design view.

Through my design inquiries I found that trends influence the experiential elements of services, such as touch-points, tone-of-voice and service personality. Trends also contribute to an understanding of popular aesthetics and styles that contribute to frame and communicate meaning. In my view, this affirms the need for the service designer to master multiple modes of visual and aesthetic communication. I believe it also confirms the need for practical approaches, methods or tools to help the designer in the translation. If cultural approaches such as *Trendslation* are to be adopted into practice, there is a need for the service designer to continuously update her cultural knowledge, building a personal repository of references and expressions. This means that the service designer needs allocated resources, such as time, in the early project phases to explore and identify cultural input and expressions that can be brought into the project. This could include attending relevant fairs or seminars, going on inspirational travels or being connected to organizations that promote creative professions and expressions.

Seen in fashion and lifestyle domains, the ongoing process of trend alignment to create products that resonate with consumers offers a dynamic approach that I believe Service Design can benefit from. By continuously identifying and analyzing trends, the service designer can develop an ability to view these in relation to wider views of larger societal, economic, political and ecological movements. This can contribute in developing an understanding of the context of the user and to uncover not yet identified needs and shifting values. This, I believe, can prompt the design of new services that engage people and publics as co-producers and active contributors in shaping meaning, and that contribute to the construction of cultural capital. Such a trend-focused area of service design could be termed **trend-driven service design**, which I define as "the design of service offerings and their delivery

across touch-points and time, that are based upon cultural trends, cultural meaning and value, such that they are experienced as culturally relevant".

4.4.2 Trendslation and experiential Service Design

As I found a lack of means in Service Design practice for such trend transformation and application in current service design approaches, this thesis contributes by introducing the Trendslation approach, which has been developed throughout the course of this design research inquiry. It looks closer into the processes and mechanisms throughout three stages of semantic transformation in which the service designer synthesizes and communicates meaning through conceptual, visual and design-rich interpretations. The main objective for the introduction of such an approach has been to explore the innovation potential of trends to design service offerings and details in line with shifting cultural dynamics. Trendslation shows one possible way that specifically addresses the application of trends in Service Design.

Further, my practice revealed how I was contributing to frame and disseminate meaning through the service offerings, details and touch-points I designed. This was achieved through the transformation of contemporary cultural resources, references and materials, as seen though the practice presented in Chapter 3. To arrive at the design of services that are culturally embedded and influenced, I had actively scanned trends, for example by going on city safaris to observe the pulse and personality of specific cities (in this case Oslo and London), visited art and cultural institutions to obtain impression of creative and contemporary expressions, engaged in online ethnographic investigations of social media content and through websites, as well as exploring popular cultural resources and references, such as found within movies, music, lifestyle magazines or consumer products, to actively 'read the signs' of popular culture.

Analytically, in Publication 2 I bring up the notion of *service style* and *service aesthetics*. I contemplate how these factors become significant in conveying meaning also in the design details of services. The topics of style and aesthetics are in themselves of such dimensions that in this thesis I have settled on pointing toward the significance of taking these into broader consideration in Service Design, as currently there does not seem to be a focus on services and style. This may perhaps be due to a view of style as an add-on or finishing in Service Design. However, Schön (1992, p. 139) notes how "the concept of design world is closely related to that of style. It is a mistake to think about style as a relatively trivial add-on to the

substance of design-knowledge". I found that experiential approaches such as *Trendslation*, and creative and design-rich tools, like the experience-centric service journey, can contribute to develop services that "look and feel" right to the intended user, by speaking the popular cultural language of the time.

For services in the lifestyle consumer market I believe that developing an understanding of contemporary contexts, styles, aesthetics, codes and modes of communication can evoke pleasure, surprise and engagement. Every detail and touch-point needs to be carefully considered and designed to support the intended experiential outcome, which can be operationalized through following the procedural stages of *Trendslation*.

Developing and following the triple-staged semantic transformation approach has offered valuable insights and findings that have shaped the popular cultural connection that I am drawing up. Yet, as I question in Chapter 3, section 3.7.1, the approach has rather taken the shape of a framework to think through, rather than being fully developed into a fixed and functioning model. I have found that the consequences of implementing the approach has brought forward new interesting aspects that I have considered more significant for igniting a discussion of Service Design and its cultural connectivity, that hopefully can contribute in the development of the field forward. However, I will briefly reconsider the triple-staged-semantic transformation.

4.4.3 Towards culturally infused service experiences

Looking back to Karjalainen's model of semantic transformation (2007), the author offers a framework that assists the design of products that embody brand values, in which the designer is seen as encoding intentional meanings into products by way of design characteristics. da Motta-Fihlo's (2017, p. 169) concept of 'Semantic Transformation for Experiences' furthers this notion by expanding this semantic notion into a service view, as "the act of encoding intentional brand meanings into the qualities and characteristics of the settings that enable the service experience". The suggested triple-staged transformation builds on these same principles of creating design features that embody references, however, it includes the transformation of trend values into meaning, and this meaning further into offerings and details. This includes an additional stage of transformation with the aim to identify the meaning of trends, and is suggested by way of implementing trend hunting techniques and methods. This is currently not common practice in Service Design, neither is it part of Karjalainen's model. Examples of such trend techniques and methods are proposed in Publication 2. The aim is to gain a

clear understanding and interpretation of the underlying meaning of selected trends, to be further transformed into service specific details.

In reflection, and with a critical eye on my own work, a transformation of meaning in service design includes the design of service details and elements that are both physical and non-physical. This extends beyond Karjalainen's product focused model. It brings up questions regarding a further extension of the product semantic view into a landscape of wider culturally oriented social semiotics, as services include symbolic and intangible constructs that convey meaning such as interactions, gestures, service personality and rituals, as well as being enacted and experienced in specific cultural contexts. By taking such considerations into account at an earlier stage, or even, by moving away from the notion of a semantic transformation, for both analysis and practice, we perhaps may contribute to a more apt model of culturally infused service experiences, and potentially significantly different approaches to the ones that have tended to predominate in Service Design as outlined in Chapter 2, and here.

However, I would nevertheless like to point out that the process of this triple transformation has been paramount in shaping the Trendslation approach that I have proposed. The triple semantic transformation approach has been significant for shaping the service design artefacts that have assisted in identifying that there is potential in connecting Service Design with popular culture, including the surfacing of trends as Service Design material. It has also contributed to the development of the framing, designing, use and analysis of the experience-centric service journey, and the identification of culturally informed touch-points. In the next sections I turn to these two interrelated topics.

4.5 Concept # 4: The experience-centric service journey

4.5.1 On the service journey

The practical tool of the experience-centric service journey that I have developed has its main aim to assist in the communication of curated and experience-centric service encounters and touch-points across time and through touch-points. In addition, it functions as a visual elicitation of popular cultural meanings. Throughout the design explorations, I used such journeys to create shared understandings of the intended experience, with non-designers and designers in intersecting design fields. These journeys also functioned as conversation pieces with partners, in the early development and

conceptual phase, allowing for discussions regarding intentional meaning and emotional value, due to more immediate and intuitive responses that the visually and design-rich journey representations evoked, in comparison to the more traditional and functionalistic service journey.

The experience-centric journey, as a visual representation of the experiential factors influencing the service experience could be seen as a mapping of the flows of meanings that travel through "complex, multi-linear ecologies" (Julier & Munch, 2019, p.165) set in motion throughout a service journey. By combining graphic design elements, such as colours and shapes to communicate information hierarchies, with text and images, the journey conveys connections between service moments, touch-points and experiential details that together shape a stylistically consistent service experience through time. As such, this form of the service journey can be seen as a mapping of the flows of meaning that come into play throughout the service ecology. Simultaneously the images function as representations of the user, their practices and cultural codes that communicate an additional layer of meaning (See Chapter 3, Figure 3.25 & 3.26).

The service journey is a valuable tool that has seen many forms and modes of expression. I have found, however, that the dominant format used is mainly of a more technical character, which of course carries much strength for deconstructing service complexities. Yet, when designing for popular cultural service experiences I became aware that there is a need to bring in the visual, stylistic and expressive that can stimulate more immediate, emotional and intuitive responses, as seen in for example the GEE tool of Matthews (2016) as described in Chapter 2.

Roxburgh and Irvin (2018) draw connections between visual communication and Service Design, arguing the significance of the aesthetics of visualizations throughout the Service Design process. The authors note how designers in visual communication are "experts in telling stories visually", and thus in communicating immaterial ideas that could benefit Service Design (p. 201). The experience-centric service journey can contribute in such aesthetic and visual storytelling, by designing service journey narratives that encapture the complex, the experiential and the meaningful.

Through practice, the experience-centric service journey showed to be effective for creating shared understandings of the intended experience between myself and other creative professionals, also with non-designers. This journey format contributes to the service designer's toolbox, as an

experience focused journey representation that can co-exist with the more functionalistic service journey.

4.5.2 Designing culturally informed touch-points

Following the stages of semantic transformation in practice has further revealed how key touch-points influenced by trends could contribute to create engagement, pleasure and excitement. This means that touch-points can be designed or curated to enhance the intended meaning by signifying symbolic and intrinsic meaning, and in turn take part as signifiers of cultural capital.

The theory of distinction by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), concerning, in a wide view, how people in modern Western culture draw distinctions among themselves based on either economic or cultural capital, has found its way into consumption-oriented scholarship as within e.g. Marketing and Economics (Holt, 2004; Norton, 2003; Thorsby, 2004). Cultural capital can be seen as the symbolic and signifying attributes of, for instance, branded products, dress style or lifestyle choices reflecting cultural knowledge that is accumulated and displayed through signals, attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours and/or goods consumed (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Within branding theory, the creation of cultural capital is discussed as the most valued resource customers receive through brand consumption, in how branded products denote the users cultural position (e.g. Holt, 2004). In fashion studies, cultural capital is closely connected to the notion of identity construction, in how choices of apparel or style of dress denotes cultural dispositions (Kaiser, 2012). In an economic framing Throsby (1999, p. 6) has drawn linkages between economic and cultural capital, defining cultural capital as "the stock of cultural value embodied in an asset". Throsby notes how such assets exist in tangible forms, such as, for example, products, artworks or architecture, and in intangible forms, such as ideas, values and practices. He further presents causal connections between economic and cultural value that come into play between the tangible and intangible through services, for example how music is consumed through streaming services, arguing that "cultural capital may give rise to economic value" (p. 8). These connections between cultural and economic value enabled through networks of tangible and intangible 'assets', or touch-points as I would suggest, may carry significance for a popular cultural service design view.

To design for the display and accumulation of cultural capital, I have identified an area of culturally reflexive touch-points. I have chosen to term

such touch-points that are curated or designed to signify cultural capital as 'culturally informed touch-points', described in Publication 4. By this I suggest that a popular cultural view of service design may benefit from introducing the notion of cultural capital as a mode of value creation, sharing and critique, more deeply into the field. I suggest this may be achieved by exploring which identity-constructing elements contribute to create cultural value in both experiential and related business and innovation senses in a Service Design view.

I now briefly address my reflection upon introducing a subset of cultural capital, suggested as 'social awareness capital', in Publication 1. The reason for this was my observation of user engagement towards acting more socially conscious in commercial contexts if there was an opportunity to share this act, for example in social media, in such, displaying a form of cultural capital. However, I chose to move away from the introduction of such a term, as I did not go deeper into societal issues or social innovation specifically, yet I believe that the notion of cultural capital is still highly relevant in Service Design terms. By designing new services influenced by contemporary culture, it becomes possible to design for symbolic and identity constructing value, driven by meaning. Such a meaning-driven service design approach could contribute to (re) frame value by identifying what kind of culturally negotiated experiences users expect, or even demand in new changing economical conditions. By designing key touch-points in line with trends, brands could motivate and inspire new practices, like re-making and re-defining products.

Looking back again at *Remix*, the design work showed how such an experience focused service could contribute in motivating users to re-shape existing fashion products, like up-cycling fashion apparel. Through the website and social media posts, the users are provided with inspirational material and educative content that guides the users to re-design existing products. These 're-mixed' products could thus be seen as new cultural objects and identity creators in their own right, displaying symbolic value of cultural capital when worn. My point is that such products too, could be seen as cultural touch-points. These play an influential role for prompting cultural production, as in influencing other individuals to re-make products, and the production of culture through the use and mediatization of cultural resources and means of engagement.

Pookulangara and Koesler (2011) note how shifting dynamics of social media networks and distribution of information in a sustainable fashion view, allows

for consumer interaction, not only with the brand, but also with like-minded, giving rise to a "culture of sharing". In the case of *Remix*, it further became clear to me how the user, in contributing with touch-points in the shape of content to *Remix*, such as videos and DIY-guides, as well as re-designed products, could be seen to produce intangible and symbolic value through the shaping of new knowledge, new skills or new styles, engagign in such sharing culture.

The *Remix* service experience included workshops and a maker space in the physical concept stores where creative individuals could help customers with re-designing pre-worn apparel. In this way, branded concept stores could be seen as potential hubs in alternative business models that enable new relations betweeen consumer and producer (Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011). Further, concept stores or branded physical spaces could be viewed as cultural touch-points that become sites of cultural production in engaging with the circulation of trends, experiences and products negotiating between cultural and economic value. This also highlights the neccesity of the service designer to additionally take into account the intrinsic meaning in every experiential detail. This can include the tone of voice and choice of wording for e.g. hashtags or wifi passwords, or considering the 'personality' of AI bots taking over communicative roles. It can include taking into account curated music by specific artists or selected genres, or considering the cultural status of collaborating actors.

Together I find this illuminates how every detail plays a key role in communicating popular service experiences. I believe that this demonstrates that a popular cultural view of and within Service Design could entail an expansion of service value in and as cultural capital. The reframing of service value could as such extend towards symbolic, social, educational and emotional value. I find this interesting as potential and emerging new business models bridge into Service Design and its impact in shaping new economical factors.Voices within sustainable fashion advocate for alternative economies such as non-monetary exchanges of skills, time, knowledge, and social conviviality (Hirscher & Fuad-Luke, 2013), where participatory design, and collaborative consumption could contribute not only to develop sustainable products, but also create sustainable lifestyles (Rissanen 2011, p. 127). Such views could perhaps be brought into Service Design in the expansion of service design value.

Another point I wish to highlight is how I reckognize that culturally located services can benefit from considering the networks and dynamics shaped

by social media, such as advocated by Pookulangara and Koesler (2011). This means that the service designer can design touch-points specifically to enhance the experience with reference to popular culture, and that also fit new media formats, such as seen in fashion (Mendes, 2019; Rocamora, 2017). This may entail extending such culturally informed touch-point into more specific categories, such as 'social-media-friendly touch-points' or even 'Instagrammable touch-points'. The symbolic and related business and communicative innovation is that service touch-points can be designed to fit the specific characteristics of social media platforms. Fashion brands are for example creating branded environments and staged settings designed specifically to be captured and shared on Instagram (Mendes, 2019). With this in mind, popular cultural experiences are becoming increasingly distributed and shared, open to new publics, and are no longer dependent on localized participation to create global engagement through media content enabled by new media formats. I anticipate that this will become increasingly important to take into consideration when designing for popular service experiences alike.

4.6 Concept #5: Designing for cultural service design and value

4.6.1 Creatively and culturally informed Service Design

Julier (2013) notes how "the designer's role is the creation of value. This most obvious value is commercial, but the concept may also include social, cultural, environmental, political and symbolic-value" (p. 16). Service design too discusses value creation and co-creation, as I outline in Chapter 2. However, the notion of cultural capital is not discussed in detail in Service Design. As service encounters are experienced, situated and shared, cultural service value could be seen as co-constructed, co-curated and co-enacted. New meanings are actively made 'in consumption', or in use, due to the way people implement new products in everyday life (du Gay et al., 1997; 2013). In a service view, new meanings could perhaps be seen to be made due to the implementation of services in everyday life.

I strongly suggest that Service Design could take a more active role in shaping relationships of use and consumption, value creation and identity construction, by looking into how the service designer actually constructs value, such as cultural capital, through the design of service offerings and details that themselves attain cultural relevance. I observe that similar discussions are present within fashion theory, and sustainable fashion studies, as fashion brands turn towards new economic models that are reliant

on customer participation and engagement, such as services for rental, sharing and re-use of fashion apparel (Armstrong et al., 2015; Niinimäki, 2017). Yet, there is a lack of conversation between Service Design and such interconnecting domains, and of practice-oriented Service Design approaches to bring forward the construction of cultural value. My suggestion is that an increased awareness of the notion of cultural capital within Service Design can assist in developing services that can provide additional layers to the understanding of service value.

Following the accounts throughout the previous sections, I have proposed a trend-driven service design view that frames culturally located services as popular cultural constructs in the way they are designed in, for and through contemporary culture. Services can be shaped by the uptake and transformation of contemporary cultural trends, and in turn, such services can influence popular culture by way of new uses and practices. I suggest that this culturally sensitive and reflexive area of Service Design, mainly operating within the creative and cultural economy, could be termed *popular cultural service design.* This view places Service Design as creative and culturally informed, as experience-focused and value oriented, and as contributing in the meaning making and cultural value.

Today, as services are becoming inherent parts of urban everyday lives, in how we interact with, through or in relation to services on a daily basis, I see no reason why Service Design should not too, take part in a larger discussion of service design, design and its popular cultural vale. Services are already part of contemporary culture in how we display and activate cultural resonance and experience.

4.7 Concept # 6: Service Design cultural intermediaries

4.7.1 Mediating cultural meaning and value in Service Design

The perspective that I draw up indicates that services are increasingly embedded in popular culture. This raises questions regarding Service Design and its cultural role forward. Looking back to chapter 2, I describe Service Design as an evolving field. This new direction, I believe, also implies an evolving service designer role. As non-designers increasingly are adopting practical Service Design methods and tools, I find it particularly interesting with regards to the service designer and her work in shaping cultural meaning and value, and what expertise and skillsets are needed in such.

In this section I wish to highlight what I recognize as cultural intermediary roles of Service Design. I do this with reference to the concept of the cultural intermediary. Cultural intermediaries, as presented in Chapter 2, are introduced within the social sciences as creative individuals, such as people working within design or media, or as institutions (e.g. organizations, brands) that play significant roles in attaching particular meanings and lifestyles to products and services. Currently, Service Design literature does not discuss the concept of the cultural intermediary, neither is it addressed in practice. However, my design work quite clearly indicates how the service designer mediates between practice and popular cultural constructs through several stages in the design process, as well as between a multitude of actors and influential factors, between brand, design, economy, education and business. Further, it shows that the service designer takes on an active role in the mediation of meaning, when designing for services that are culturally located, and shaped by the uptake of cultural trends.

To elaborate these concerns I choose to pull forward two sub components that I describe as the *service designer cultural intermediary*, and *the cultural intermediaries of service design*. I frame the concept of the service designer cultural intermediary as one who activates new meaning through the services and service details she designs by way of experiential and trend aware approaches and tools. This further encompasses a view of the cultural intermediaries of Service Design, in which I offer a view of service constructs, such as key users and collaborative actors, as contributors in further framing and disseminating cultural meaning and value.

4.7.2 The service designer cultural intermediary

Cultural intermediaries are described as contextualized market actors that frame products and services as legitimate through their professional creative expertise (Maguire & Matthews, 2012). Such cultural intermediary work is often symbolic and immaterial, and frames products, services and behaviours that are viewed as desirable and esteemed. Cultural intermediaries are seen to play important roles in the articulation of production and promotion of consumption, and are also involved in the provision of symbolic goods and services (du Gay et. al, 2013). Certainly, I believe that the service designer too, as a creative individual, plays an important role in activating meaning when designing new services for brands and businesses that operate in commercial and culturally connected areas.

Throughout the design research of this inquiry that has been situated in the context of fashion and lifestyle, the activation of the experiential approach of *Trendslation* has contributed to foreground how the service designer does in fact contribute to legitimize new services as 'desirable and esteemed' through design expertise. Further, the design of culturally located services contributes in realizing and shaping an expanded cultural view from within Service Design. In relating these concerns, this bears on additional points that I find calls for the need to attend to the service designers' dispositions, competence and specific skills in developing cultural expertise. What is it that constitutes the service designers ability to frame services as legitimate and esteemed?

Maguire and Matthews (2012) pull forward the skill to 'read the market' and its users (consumers), and the ability to evaluate aesthetic possibilities in line with a brand or organization, as a distinct attribute of the cultural intermediary. This includes competence in observing and interpreting our cultural and social world, and the ability to embed these insights and experiences within the creative expressions the cultural intermediary shapes (Kelly, 2014).

In my opinion, this provides a valid starting point for considering an expansion of Service Design competency towards cultural awareness and sensitivity. I find this both interesting and important, as my work indicates the significance of the 'cultural capacity' of the service designer in market-oriented Service Design practice. To design products that are perceived as attractive on the market, du Gay et al. (2013, p. 56) propose how designers need to "*embody* culture in the things they design" to design products that are functional, but also inscribed with meanings as well as uses. How then, does the service designer embody culture to design services that are perceived as attractive and meaningful on the market?

4.7.3 Trend awareness in the service designer cultural intermediary

If we look back to the practice as presented in the previous chapter, I outline a view of the service designer adopting an intermediary role, as a "trend transformer". This includes my notion of how trends can function as innovation material to design for services that are aligned to and situated in contemporary cultural contexts. I propose that by activating the developed Trendslation approach, and by way of creative and communicative tools, the service designer can design novel services influenced by contemporary culture, that in turn themselves influence culture through the construction, framing and dissemination of meaning.

In the entanglement between Service Design, consumption and culture, and between popular experiences, people, and use, I believe there is a need for the service designer cultural intermediary to acquire a certain level of trend awareness, and competence in trend-hunting techniques to design for services that are perceived as being in line with customers' lifestyles and worldviews. In publication 2, I discuss some simple methods that also form a core part of the Trendslation approach. These entail looking to trends to identify symbolic mechanisms and to understand "cultural processes of production and consumption of material goods rich in immaterial contents" (Pedroni, 2012, p. 124). This can include the ability to read trends by observing 'what is happening on the streets' in attempts to recognize patterns, details, connections and changes in consumer styles, including visual and aesthetic styles such as seen in materials, colours and form, but also extending into understanding the social trends linked to lifestyles, as Pedroni elaborates.

My suggestion is not that the service designer becomes a professional trend hunter, as this is a profession in itself. Rather, to be aware of the fact that trend hunting, as detailed by Pedroni, offers strategies for identifying shifts in consumption patterns that enable the design of consumer products (and services) that fit consumer lifestyles. From my many years of working with concept development and graphic design within the fashion industry, trend hunting and the use of trend resources was a significant activity that was continuously practiced to keep in line with 'newness', to be able to design products that attracted the market, so to speak. However, up until now, this has been non-existent in Service Design, yet I find little doubt that this may bear significance when designing for services that are culturally located.

The trend-conscious service designer can act similar to a trend hunter, as a "matching point between the consumer's need of distinction and the producers attempt at creating distinctive goods" (Pedroni, 2012, p 112), or in this case, creating distinctive services. The cultural intermediary can identify and synthesize cultural trends to extract symbolic material from a variety of cultural resources, and embed these insights and experiences within the design work (Kelly, 2014; Soar, 2002).

In the design work presented in Chapter 3 the activation of *Trendslation* was seen to stimulate the decoding and encoding of meaning through the curation and use of sources of cultural material. This included the use and re-use of popular images and expressions in e.g. popular cultural magazines, social media posts, websites or samples of graphic design. In actually physically intervening with the materials, thus in conversation with the materials

(Schön, 1983), the cultural intermediary service designer intervenes, innovates and orients the selection of cultural input. The synthesis of such material can be further used to frame new service concepts as desirable solutions "by surrounding the not-yet-legitimate with the established signs of authority and credibility" The service designer uses "both established, legitimate culture and the forms of media at their disposal" to influence other individuals' perceptions and attachments (Maguire & Matthews, 2010).

This can be seen materialized in the example of *Prefall*, as described in Publication 1, and seen in Figure 0.1 in the Preface of this Exegesis - and of *Remix*, where the consumption of pre-owned clothing has been legitimized by surrounding the design with the established signs and visual language from high street and luxury fashion brands. The shaping of services with such semantically coded language assists in communicating and re-framing the meaning of pre-owned fashion. By using codes and signifiers aligned to cultural trends, the cultural intermediary can contribute to refashion products with low esteem as worthy and desirable, as described by Sarah Baker (2012) in regards to the resale market of retro furniture.

In my opinion, this shows that the service designer can benefit from adopting and implementing simple trendhunting techniques to create awareness and sensitivity of trends, when designing for services in the cultural consumer market. This also points to the need for Service Design to introduce and operationalize approaches and tools to support such trend awareness, as this is currently lacking. The design explorations show that this requires both expertise and experience, on behalf of the service designer cultural intermediary, and foregrounds new questions and implications regarding this new service designer role.

4.7.4 A new service designer role

Maguire (2014) summarizes key traits of the cultural intermediary based on Bourdieu's notions. She pulls forward how cultural intermediaries operate within the new economy, work with new occupations, act as tastemakers, and possess cultural expertise and legitimacy, cultural capital and dispositions. In a cultural service view, service design could be read as a new occupation, situated in the (new) cultural political economy, with the service designer as a cultural intermediary acting as a tastemaker by designing for services that are shaped by cultural trends.

Cultural intermediaries are "differentiated by their explicit claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields"

(Matthews & Maguire, 2012), and possess specialized knowledge and cultural capital accumulated from education, professional experience and personal biography (Moor, 2008). To function as 'guarantors of credibility' the cultural intermediary relies on personal disposition and embodied cultural capital as the basis of their professional credibility, Matthews and Maguire note (2012; 2014). I draw on these perspectives to imply how the service designer enacts a cultural intermediary role by applying specific design skillsets, such as design rich visualizations, and creative concept development. The service designer cultural intermediary draws together her specific design expertise, curatorial role and cultural knowledge to frame new meaning that has impact on further legitimization and estimation of cultural value. In addition, I see the service designer cultural intermediary to dispose a personal cultural repository, a collection of popular cultural references accumulated by way of a personal cultural interest, which is accessed when translating cultural trends into 'credible' services.

With this in mind, I look upon what could constitute my own claims to expertise as a service designer cultural intermediary, to reflect upon the dimensions that support my professional credibility, and embodied cultural capital. First of all I see relations to the relevance of my mixed creative educational background, with over a decade of training within arts, visual communication, industrial and service design. I have built competence within areas such as art and design history, colour and design theory, material technology as well as having extensive training in hand drawing, figurative modelling and different visualization techniques. Further, my professional practice from working as a design practitioner within the fashion and lifestyle industry has provided me additional cultural expertise. I have also years of work experience as a service employee, working for lifestyle brands and cultural institutions that are high on cultural capital, providing first hand insight and experience into the dynamics between consumption, customer preferences and popular culture. This has also offered access to personal relations and networks within interrelating creative and popular cultural spheres. Further, I also recognize that my current contextual and situated profession within an acknowledged educational institution, which has contributed to gain access to partners and collaborations, bears significance.

My point here is to bring forward how a more cultural sensitive branch of Service Design may call for developing a new role for the service design practitioner. This could be as a 'professional translator and communicator of meaning' in service design. The service designer cultural intermediary could

perhaps be seen as one who develops specific skillsets and who operates the conceptual, creative and communicative aspects of service design innovation. In the semantic transformation in product design, Karjalainen (2007) pulls forward the designers' experience, intuition and creativity as significant traits in the semantic transformation for successfully conveying intended meaning. I believe these are important factors that need to be taken into account when contemplating the service designer cultural intermediary. I highlight this as I think it is important to bring forward the unique competence, skills, experience and designer intuition that the service designer embodies, and that can not easily be transmitted to, or adopted by, non-designers.

Looking to a recent contribution to the field, Korper, Holmlid and Patrìcio (2018) discuss meaning and value creation in Service Design innovation as contextual, and suggest how service design-driven innovation may differ from the user-centered view. With links to Verganti's work of meaning-innovation, amongst others, the authors bring upon the notion of how users should perhaps not always be the primary or sole source of information in the innovation phase. Rather, the designer can "read" meaning that emerges, and design for services that are relevant before the user knows that this is what they desire (Korper et al., 2018). In a cultural intermediary framing, the central traits and skills that the service designer possesses in translating shifting trends, or 'reading emerging meanings', can be one such way to uncover not yet existing user needs, and to interpret shifting values and meaning that can be brought into the innovation process.

Identifying key traits of the cultural intermediary service designer may suggest that not every service designer needs to be considered as a cultural intermediary. Rather, the service designer cultural intermediary could be seen as one who activates cultural resonance and disposes a personal repository of cultural knowledge – and operates and works within the creative and cultural economy. The service designer as a cultural intermediary possesses the ability to read the market and the signs of the streets, and holds a level of trend awareness, with the ability to synthesize and communicate meaning through visual, creative and design rich interpretations.

4.7.5 Service cultural intermediaries

Following my design practice, it became apparent to me how also certain elements and service constructs themselves could function as intermediaries. Although at a conceptual level, the services that were designed revealed additional potential cultural intermediary roles within the service encounters.

Without going into too much detail I will offer a brief summary of some views that address these notions, and that can contribute to this conversation.

For culturally located service concepts, the service employees play key roles as cultural intermediaries as "frontline service intermediaries" (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, p. 10). These employees frame value for customers through displaying, sharing and mediating new practices and touch-points. In the case of *Remix*, the employees could potentially play key roles in curating experiential elements such as fashion items, music and images shared in the branded retail store and on social media platforms. The employees of cultural fashion brands often possess high amounts of cultural capital themselves (Pettinger, 2014), functioning as intermediaries between brand values and cultural material and meaning.

Key service users may also be placed in intermediary roles, through contributing to the cyclic interplay of consumption, use and mediation, within specific sites of cultural production. This becomes apparent in services that offer the user mixed roles, between producer and consumer, in which the user contributes to co-create or co-curate, different forms of content. Fuchs et al. (2013) describe the need for brands to validate the quality of collaborating users with specific creative competences to avoid develauation of brand perception when users co-create products (Fuchs et al., 2013) and may imply the need for modes to curate such co-collaborators.

The case example *Remix* further illustrated how the service offering could be viewed in an intermediary position through its influence on sociocultural practices, framing new ways of "consuming" pre-owned fashion products. For the service designer cultural intermediary it can be beneficial to take into account such significant roles and relations.

Finally, the work and practice also showed how the intermediary work could be part of a collaborative process, where cultural value is co-constructed in practice between a network of cultural intermediaries (Kuipers, 2014). Throughout my design practice I have repeatedly co-created the experiential aspects together with several other creative professionals including e.g. photographers, illustrators, graphic designers, web developers, artists and musicians that contribute with their specific aesthetic sense and personal style. The service designer cultural intermediary needs to acquire knowledge of which creative style that fits each individual project, curating a network of cultural intermediaries.

The service designer may act as a creative or experience director, that both orchestrates and designs for visual and aesthetic consistency throughout the whole journey, and also curates a selection of co-intermediary creators. An important factor for success is the ability to communicate the service design constructs in such intuitive ways that collaborating design professionals can further interpret and translate the experiential through their work. Such networks of cultural intermediaries may additionally contribute to legitimize and mediatize the service further into the sociocultural sphere by, for example, sharing their creative contributions in social media or on personal websites, by entering the design results in contests, or by personal media presence or engagement.

These interconnecting perspectives frame the concept of service design cultural intermediaries operating between practice and popular cultural constructs. On one hand it suggests how the service designer actively interprets, transforms and communicates meaning. On the other hand it proposes how actors within the service encounters themselves further contribute to the dissemination of such meaning. The concept of the service designer cultural intermediary brings forward a notion of a new service designer role, and the distinctive attributes she possesses. Possible implications of this for Service Design education is something I discuss more in Chapter 5.

4.7.6 The circulation of cultural meaning in service design

An overall reflection of these connections between Service Design and popular culture that I have attempted to draw up is how such configurations place services within the cyclic interplay of cultural meaning and value. In the second edition of *Doing Cultural Studies*, du Gay et al. (2013) suggest the need to update the cultural circuit by also placing services within the cycle, rather than products alone. As more and more products no longer exist solely as physical artifacts, but exist in relation to, or through a service that may influence both the production of cultures, and the cultures of production (du Gay et al., 2013), Service Design can be seen to play a considerable role in this circulation.

Perhaps then, by placing Service Design within the circuit of culture could highlight and illustrate the interconnectedness and influences of meaning through the dimensions of production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity. This could shape a view of how culture is

shaped through and between the service offering, actors, users, touch-points, technologies and media.

Culturally informed services, like *Remix*, intend to offer experiential crossover opportunities between production and consumption, where the user takes on the role as a cultural consumer and producer. In the market examples such as the independent food community platform Mouth[13] or the established craft re-selling site Etsy[14] are services that prompt new signifying and DIY practices that contribute to co-production of both cultural products and meaning. Production is no longer separated from the user, intellectually nor geographically (du Gay et al., 2013). These services offer users the opportunity to become co-producers and co-curators of both physical products and digital content, in which new media plays an inherent role in further framing and disseminating meaning connected with the dimensions of representation and identity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, new social media platforms enable identity construction through the representation of such experiential production and consumption by way of new media sharing practices. Production becomes part of new cultural practices, surpassing the production of physical products, extendint into the production and consumption of immaterial content such as ideas, knowledge and identities.

In the case of *Remix*, as a service that would exist within an established brand (P3), questions regarding regulation became important in the discussions with the partners during the development of the project. In services that rely on user involvement, through co-curation and co-production of content, how can the brand assure that the content aligns to the overall brand image? To what extent can the brand interfere, and what kind of power relations come into play through such regulation? On another note, I believe service designers need an expanded awareness of their responsibilities in regards to regulation in the services they design. I do not mean that there is a need to take into account every aspect of legislation, but for the service designer to be conscious and aware that the services they design, will not only affect people as users, but also people working within the service, either as front line intermediary workers, or backstage contributors. This is something that I further reflect upon in the following chapter.

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13   See https://www.mouth.com
14   See https://www.etsy.com

Culture is dynamic and diverse, as is the field and practice of Service Design. Culture takes form between and through service interactions and multiple touch-points. With this in mind, I believe new sets of questions can be brought forward regarding the increasingly embedment of services in everyday life. What are the ongoing cultural negotiations that frame service experiences connected to consumption and use? How do practices related to mediated consumption affect service cultures? When designing for services within such popular cultural domains there is a need to acknowledge how these services contribute in this active construction, circulation and dissemination of cultural meaning through the cultural intermediary roles that exist within this dynamic circuit.

4.8 A cultural model of Service Design

4.8.1 Highlighting new connections

Service Design is multifaceted and dynamic. The connections between the field and concepts from popular culture that I bring into light through the six key concepts that I have discussed, can be seen as one way forward in which the field and practice may move closer to cultural reflexivity. I have drawn up a model that highlights these connections and their becoming between research and practice, and as made apparent through my work, informed by qualitative methods and design techniques in an overall RtD mode.

4.8.2 Gathering concepts and approaches

Service Design is gradually moving into areas of lifestyle consumption, as seen through my partnerships with commercial businesses actors. In the market, popular cultural services are offering cross-platform and mediatized experiences that are localized, yet distributed, that enable new practices and user engagement in the co-creation of cultural meaning and value through mediated service interactions. This draws the field and practice towards a cultural awareness and sensitivity that I have addressed by inquiring into the roles of Service Design, and the service designer in innovating services that are trend-aligned and informed, to design for experiences that are influenced by, and through popular culture. The field and practice today still resides largely in areas of Management and Marketing into areas that are public and move towards social innovation. There are connections to be made, across multiple concepts and between theories in which these notions can be challenged by bringing in new perspectives that connect the making of service design, popular service experiences and encounters, and mediated

and business-related innovation. What perhaps then can provide further explorations of new connections is such a cultural model of Service Design.

4.8.3 Outline of a model

Drawn together these views are conceptualized in the model I outline in Figure 4.7, p. 147, which shows the connections between the six concepts that frame my transdisciplinary view of Popular Cultural Service Design. It illuminates the interconnecting concepts and theories that have been drawn on to shape this popular cultural connection. It also indicates various possibilities between areas of Service Design and popular cultural components, and may engage new perspectives and additional cultural cross-sections.

4.8.4 Matters for consideration

In related design views from product, interaction and fashion design, the foregrounding of culture and its relevance has brought forwards the significance of meaning construction towards the experiential. As Service Design is still a relatively young field this could indicate that following the foundational grounding of the field and practice that has taken place over the past decades, now could be the time to open up towards such contemporary cultural significance. If Service Design is to strengthen its position as a field within Design, it seems to me natural to bring closer cultural concepts that take into consideration impact and influences of popular meaning and use. Service Design as such, shows popular cultural relevance, also in terms of its relation to areas such as branding, media and economics. This view, I believe also initiates wider conversations of the inclusion and development of cultural concepts in Service Design.

The model that I present provides a starting point for opening up to additional discussions, reflections, and critique that could define a clearer cultural agenda with more elaborated investigations of cultural framings and concepts to the field. This could entail drawing larger connections between multiple cultural concepts into details of Service Design theory, processes and practice, or the focus on specific cultural views to pull forward in a Service Design framing.

SERVICE DESIGN

Service Design Innovation

Semantic Transformation

Cultural Meaning

Meaning-Innovation

representation

Mediatization

Service Design Practice

Research through Design

regulation

identity

trend-driven
service design

3.

2.

4.

popular cultural
service experience

the experience-
centric service journey

Customer Experience

POPULAR CULTURAL SERVICE DESIGN

Cultural Capital

popular cultural
services

designing for cultural
service design & value

Service Design Practice

Research through Design

1.

5.

6.

consumption

production

service design
cultural intermediaries

Identity Construction

Circuit of Culture

Lifestyle

Mediated Consumption

The Cultural Intermediary

POPULAR CULTURE

Figure 4.7 – A Model of Popular Cultural Service Design (Dennington, C., 2020).

4.9 In reflection

4.9.1 Shifting landscape of Service Design

The contemporary service landscape is shifting swiftly in line with new needs and values, and rapid media technological advancements. Service Design as an evolving field can partake in developing cross-disciplinary practice and theory to build a broader cultural repertoire in light of the dynamic nature of the field and practice. Taken together the six concepts that I have presented throughout this chapter, I offer a connection between Service Design and concepts from popular culture that I identify as Popular Cultural Service Design. This view constitutes a direction in which I propose how creative, conceptual and communicative services can be shaped by the uptake of cultural influence, and how these in turn impact contemporary and popular cultural references and practices, by way of use and mediation. I suggest that this cultural interplay and relevance positions Service Design in relation to, and in, a cultural exchange of popular meanings. It further suggests a shift in Service Design, from a focus on the managerial and procedural to the realization of services for users whose needs, values, interests and experiences become central.

Interaction Design and Product Design have been through similar shifts of focus on the communicative and cultural, in addition to the technical and infrastructural. With its increasing relation to consumer-oriented and trend-sensitive domains, Popular Cultural Service Design opens for an understanding of Service Design's influential role in meaning-construction and circulation by way of designing what I recognize as popular cultural service experiences. These popular experiences enable mediated interactions and encounters connected to contemporary practices in lifestyle domains.

Following this, I pose that the service designer can design for such experiences by following the trend-driven service design approach that I have termed *Trendslation*. In activating cultural materials and meaning through communicative design skills, the service designer adopts a cultural intermediary role, and as such can be seen as what I entitle a service designer cultural intermediary. To assist the service designer cultural intermediary in designing holistic and stylistically consistent service experiences over time, I contribute with the experience-centric service journey, as a visual narrative that conveys a mapping of the flows of meaning that come into play in, and across, service encounters and culturally informed touchpoints.
In practice, brands and businesses within the consumer- and lifestyle

segment, such as the partners I have collaborated with throughout the course of this PhD, are opening their eyes to Service Design practice and research as means to gain competitive advantage in a rapidly shifting service landscape. I pose that integrating Service Design competency that focuses on cultural, experiential and meaning-constructing aspects of the field and practice into businesses operating within consumer-focused areas, can contribute to the innovation of well-crafted, dynamic and timely services that engage users in everyday activities and transactions, creating solutions that are perceived as attractive and meaningful in an ever-changing market. For as Verganti (2009, p. 21) asserts in his view of design-driven innovation; "meanings make a difference in the market".

If we do take into account a cultural move for the field, I believe there exists opportunities to dig deeper into the symbolic, communicative and mediatized value creation that come into play through culturally located services. In 2013 du Gay et al. update their Circuit of Culture, and present the dimension of 'representation' in a digital world. The authors contemplate how the construction of meaning by way of representation has changed, as new digital platforms and technologies have developed. Questioning such consequences of digitalized and distributed meaning within a Service Design perspective could contribute to new knowledge regarding the significant roles that mediatization could have forward in popular service ecologies.

As brought up previously in this chapter, Rocamora (2016) discusses how experiential aspects of fashion, such as the retail experience or fashion shows have shifted to become shaped *for* new media formats designed intentionally for the circulation of images in social media. Rocamora lifts forward that such image sharing and circulation goes beyond brand recognition, as it simultaneously offers measurable criteria, such as followers, likes, shares, hashtags, and types of posts, that compose data sets that brands can access to gain insight into potential consumers and their preferences. She discusses how insights from online practices have been transformed into physical manifestations, for example into the design of branded shop interiors that reflect the way people navigate websites, or by translating current aesthetic trends circulating in social media into the physical display of fashion apparel. In this sense user-generated content has direct influence in shaping new experiences with implications for innovation potentials also in a business view.

As Service Design is slowly entering lifestyle domains, I consider that the field can benefit from inquiring further into the new patterns of distributed

media and the shaping of ecologies of cultural value, such as through the co-construction and conveyance of popular meanings and practices on social media platforms like Instagram. In a marketing and branding view Rossolatos (2015) looks into how the cultural spheres that exist in social media and user-generated content form cultural representations, and enquires how cultural signs and symbols exist in ever changing and dynamic spheres where meaning is co-constructed between individuals, media, brands and use. Dessart et al. (2015, p. 38) discuss consumer engagement through "a complex web of interactions" in blurring boundaries between private and public, commercial and personal in how online communities embedded in social media contribute in shaping new ways to consume, communicate and distribute. By looking to such discussion in interconnecting fields, we may better grasp implications for the field and practice brought upon through mediatized interactions and user-generated content in a Service Design perspective.

Julier (2000, p. 48) brings up connections between contemporary consumer culture and design, as he presents the moments of consumption "from the act and experience of acquiring, owning, using – to looking, listening, smelling – or consumption of time, as in leisure activities – as wider sets of cultural and ideological systems". Today we see a shift in consumer mindsets, moving away from mass-consumption, with brands and businesses gradually following; however, in this move there is still a need to offer alternatives that evoke engagement and pleasure. Service Design could engage in re-thinking the 'moments of consumption' away from the act of acquiring, owning and using, and rather focus on the design of experiences that enhance the emotional aspects of acquisition, ownership and use.

I find that such conversations should be lifted into a Service Design perspective to bring additional influential perspectives to the field, as this could be an open space for services that are increasingly entangled with consumer goods, new media, technology and people in constantly changing conditions to contribute to this shift of mindset through offering popular cultural service experiences that engage better consumption practices.

This early-staged notion of connecting Service Design with popular culture contributes to bring Service Design discourse and practice closer together with cultural concepts. This can open for taking into consideration additional transdisciplinary relations to a wider cultural repertoire for Service Design to develop a fuller cultural awareness in terms of business innovation.

4.9.2 Conditions, challenges and changes

Standing in the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic this spring 2020, I now briefly reflect upon how we have adopted and adjusted to rapid changes that have taken place over just days, weeks and months. A boom of new services have taken on paramount roles in enabling such changes, through the servitization of offerings in response to new challenges, whether it be in education, health care or businesses. These services have rapidly adapted to enable the shaping of new practices and values influenced by the changing cultural, economical, political, societal and ecological conditions of the unexpected. Current conversations are calling out unique opportunities for industries and businesses to make significant changes in areas of consumption in the aftermath of the pandemic.

In this I believe Service Design can take on a significant role in both envisioning and designing solutions that show that there are alternative pathways that the field can help create and recreate. Whether this is by designing for services that enable participation and co-production connected to DIY cultures and communities, or service offerings related to repair or reuse, or other combinations of cultural practices and service, I imagine Service Design taking on a role in challenging the status quo of commercial industries and in providing experimental, emergent and substantive alternatives suited to need, context and changing conditions. Yet, there are still challenges for designers working within commercial business conexts, which I take up in the following chapter.

Acknowledging that services are enacted, entangled with, and experienced in, contemporary cultural contexts and conditions may affirm that Service Design is indeed multifaceted and in constant evolvement, and entails many sides of experiences as culture. A popular cultural connection may not fit all of Service Design, yet developing an understanding of popular meanings, practices and experiences in a Service Design view could potentially benefit the field in diverse ways. I reflect upon some possibilities and conclusions in the following chapter. The work from this study is to be seen as indicative, and their remains many more potential connections to be made, and fuller inquiries into the relevance of such connectivity in the wider Service Design domain. In closing this chapter we could perhaps ask, though, as Service Design is largely about designing for experience, is not experience always contextual and thereby culturally conditioned, altered, and enacted?

Chapter 5 Contributions, reflections and conclusions

5.1 Exploring new connections

5.1.1 Bridging Service Design with concepts from Popular Culture

With the rise of culturally embedded and circulated services, this thesis entitled *Refashioning Service Design. Designing for popular cultural service experience*, has sought to address the gap between experience focused aspects of Service Design, the cultural meaning and value of design, and areas of mediated interactions and experiences, in theory and in practice.

The overall aim of this study has been to explore connections between Service Design and popular cultural concepts to bring forward new service design cultural perspectives, and to provide an understanding of how Service Design may utilize and translate cultural material for innovating service offerings and details. This work has further aimed to develop practical means that can aid the service designer in designing for services that align to contemporary life and lifestyles, and to investigate potential cultural intermediary roles in a Service Design view.

In this study I have drawn on theories from Service Design, Design, Popular Culture, and Media Studies to advance a transdisciplinary view that connects Service Design with popular cultural concepts, as lifted forward through Chapter 4. These connections are grounded in the reflective and empirical data that has surfaced through three explorative research through design inquires that have been executed with three major business partners within the areas of food and fashion, as accounted for in Chapter 3.

In this final chapter I first summarize the key findings from my reflective design practice, as elaborated and discussed in Chapter 4. Secondly I draw

up a summary of the main research contributions from this study, before forwarding methodological limitations of this research inquiry. Next, I offer some reflections as a designer-researcher concerning what such a popular cultural connection may entail for the broader field of Service Design, in practice, and for Service Design education. I then suggest two potential pathways onward for future research. In closing, I consider some implications of my contributions, before offering final conclusions.

5.2 Key findings

5.2.1 Summary of research

This study was motivated by the emergence of experiential services within lifestyle industry sectors on the market that drew my attention to how these novel services were offering highly stylistic and meaningful service encounters and experiences through culturally aligned offerings and details. I noted how these services appeared to be shaped by cultural phenomena, moving through, and influencing popular culture by way of multiple modes of expressions, products and practices imbued with meaning. This raised several questions in regards to the role of service design, and the service designer, in translating such cultural phenomena, in such interplay of cultural meanings, materials and practices, as I found a lack of attention to such service design cultural perspectives within Service Design discourse, as well as in practice. The three main research questions that have guided this study, as drawn up in Chapter 1, are:

> 1. How can Service Design identify and translate cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details?

> 2. What practical approaches or tools can assist the service designer in translating cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details?

> 3. In what way can, or does, Service Design act as a cultural intermediary?

5.2.1.1 Key findings research question #1

The core question in my study asks in what way Service Design may identify and translate cultural phenomena into novel service offering and details. In response to this first research question I propose that Service Design can

identify and translate cultural phenomena into service offerings and details by way of the service designer activating a triple-semantic transformation of trends into service offerings and details. This points to a second key finding, which is that cultural phenomena, in the shape of trends show potential as innovation material for Service Design. My third key finding is that this semantic transformation of trends can shape new service offerings, and influence service experiential details, such as touch-points, tone-of-voice and service personality that signify intrinsic meaning.

These key findings have surfaced through my situated and reflexive practice where design-led research explorations in participative business partnerships have facilitated reflection and analysis in action. In this, qualitative mixed methods have assisted in exposing transdisciplinary connections and multi-layered accounts of the triple-semantic transformation of trends to service design. Through the making, synthesis and analysis of conceptual service design artefacts I have found how this triple-staged semantic transformation is effected by the service designer's synthesis and transformation of the underlying meaning of trends to innovate service offerings, and touch-points, imbued with meaning through their aesthetic, stylistic and symbolic characteristics aligned with contemporary cultural expressions and practices.

5.2.1.2 Key findings research question #2

The second research question of this study asks what approaches or tools might assist the service designer in translating cultural phenomena into novel service offerings and details. In response I offer the practice-oriented and experiential approach that I have labeled *Trendslation*, and the practical tool of the experience-centric service journey.

My situated and reflexive practice in business partnerships, and my role as educator in teaching two courses with 17 Master's design students allowed for participatory observation of students and partners, semi-structured interviews with students, analysis of student research diaries, as well as analysis of my own and student's processes and results of designing conceptual service design artefacts. This has brought forward multiple perspectives and layered accounts of meaning construction and trend-transformation across practice, teaching, research and business, in which three key findings have surfaced.

The first finding that surfaced when addressing this second research question was the need to develop a practical approach that can assist the service

designer in the interpretation, translation and communication of meaning throughout the triple-semantic transformation of trends to service design. This key finding emerged from observation of, and in reflexive conversations with the students throughout their design processes, and through my own reflective practice. To address this need, I developed the *Trendslation* approach. This approach facilitates the service designer in the identification, synthesis and communication of meaning throughout the semantic transformation through visual and design-rich modes of expression. It offers a practical way forward for innovating service offerings and touch-points that are in line with the popular cultural context of the intended user.

The second key finding that surfaced through the development of *Trendslation* was the identification of what I term 'culturally informed touch-points', as touch-points intentionally designed to display cultural and symbolic meaning. Operationalizing *Trendslation* brought forward the third finding, which was the need for a design-rich and visual service journey representation that could convey the meaning of the intended service experience across time and touch-points. I developed the experience-centric service journey as a practical tool that can assist the service designer in aligning culturally informed touch-points and meaningful interactions to develop coherent experiential and stylistic service encounters across time. In conversations with partners, I further found that this tool could facilitate shared understandings of the intended service experience and prompt further co-creational ideation.

5.2.1.3 Key findings research question #3

The third, and final research question of this study asks how Service Design can, or does, act as a cultural intermediary. I respond to this by posing that the service designer can be seen as a cultural intermediary when designing for services that are perceived as meaningful, emotional and symbolic due to their uptake and conveyance of cultural phenomena, in the shape of trends.

Through my initial literature review I found that currently Service Design does not formally take into account the notion of the cultural intermediary in theory, nor in practice. My reflections upon, and analysis of the design process and results from activating the *Trendslation* approach, together with written reflective and analytical texts, and an extended literature review has exposed and helped scaffold my situated and contextual knowledge of the intermediary role the service designer adopts when operating in popular cultural domains.

This key finding of the service designer as a cultural intermediary entails the service designer's expertise in constructing and conveying meaning through visual and design-rich service design representations, and further her cultural role in framing, disseminating and legitimizing cultural meaning, material and practices through trend-informed service offerings and details. In this sense Service Design, by way of the service designer acts as a cultural intermediary through what I identify as the service designer cultural intermediary. By encoding and enabling meaning through designing for services that are informed by, and aligned to, popular culture, the service designer further contributes to the dynamic interplay of popular cultural meanings, practices and symbolic value through the service offerings, touch-points and experiential characteristics that are designed. As such, we might say that, in light of Press and Cooper's (2003) notion of the designer as a maker of culture, the service designer cultural intermediary becomes a 'maker of popular culture'.

5.3 Key contributions

5.3.1. Theoretical and practical contributions

These key findings, as summarized above, have shaped the discussion and elaboration of the Popular Cultural Service Design view and model presented in Chapter 4. This view and model can be seen as overall contributions to Service Design inquiry that frames four key research contributions that I now highlight. These are of both theoretical and practical nature. The first contribution offers new perspectives to Service Design theory by drawing links between experiential and meaning-driven aspects of Service Design and mediatized meaning and practices from Popular Culture. The second and third contributions are seen as additions to service design practice, in the shape of the experience-centric approach of *Trendslation*, and the visual and design-rich tool of the experience-centric service journey. Together these two contributions expand the service designer's practical repertoire when designing within contemporary cultural domains. The fourth contribution offers a view of the changing role of the service designer to one as a cultural intermediary.

5.3.1.1 Contribution 1 – A model of Popular Cultural Service Design

The first contribution from this work is a view and model of Popular Cultural Service Design (as seen in figure 4.8, p. 155) . This view positions Service Design as a culturally reflexive domain in which services are seen as popular

cultural constructs in their own right, in their influential and dynamic interplay of cultural meaning.

The cultural model of service design is outlined by six new concepts that each can be seen as contributions to a wider conversation of new cultural relations to Service Design. These six concepts; *popular cultural service design, popular cultural service experience, trend-driven service design, the experience-centric service journey, designing for cultural service design value* and *service design cultural intermediaries* are elaborated in Chapter 4.

Seen together the concepts offer a culturally informed Service Design perspective that locates experiential, meaningful and culturally reflexive services as popular cultural constructs that are both shaped by, and influence contemporary culture. It proposes how new meanings and practices that arise through use, mediatization and communication of designed service offerings and their delivery across touch-points and time can be shaped by the uptake of cultural trends. Such offerings and details can be experienced as culturally relevant through the embodiment of cultural meaning and value.

This perspective further promotes the potential role of Service Design in shaping relationships of use and consumption, cultural capital and identity construction through the design of service offerings and touch-points that attain cultural relevance, in which the service designer can be seen as a cultural intermediary.

Together, this model and its six framing concepts shape an overall contribution to Service Design that accentuates a necessity of the experiential in the shaping and extending of designing and developing services.

5.3.1.2 Contribution 2 – Trendslation

My second contribution is that of the practice-oriented and experiential approach *Trendslation*. The identified triple-semantic transformation of trends to service design has been synthesized and systemized into this experiential and trend-driven service design approach that facilitates three proccessual stages of semantic transformation. *Trendslation* guides the service designer when designing for services that are culturally located and aligned, in which the designer actively interprets and applies trends to shape meaningful service experiences, offerings and touch-points. Within this contribution I also offer means for visual and design-rich interpretations of cultural meaning, codes, and practices, suggested through experiential moodboards and service design concept sketches.

The notion of trends as emotional and intangible material for innovating in service design can be seen as a contribution to the extension of the vocabulary and discourse of service design materials, as called for by Blomkvist et al. (2016).

5.3.1.3 Contribution 3 – The experience-centric service journey

The experience-centric service journey is my third contribution. This practical tool offers a journey representation that conveys meaning through a time-based visual narrative. The experience-centric service journey provides the service designer with a practical mean to align culturally informed touch-points, and to explore and develop stylistically consistent and holistic service experiences, when designing for culturally aligned and meaningful service encounters and interactions. An additional contribution herein lies in the identification of culturally informed touch-points, and their potential as signifiers of cultural capital. The identification of such culturally informed touch-points can be seen in response to the call for the development of more experiential touch-points by Clatworthy (2011), as noted in Chapter 2.

Seen together, contribution 2 and 3 offer two new additions to the service designer's toolbox. Together these practice-oriented contributions offer design-rich ways forward for trend-driven Service Design.

5.3.1.4 Contribution 4 – The service designer cultural intermediary

Finally, in the light of a popular connection to the field through practice and theory, my fourth contribution offers a view of how the service designer performs the role of a cultural intermediary by designing for trend aligned and -influenced services. This intermediary role entails mediating between cultural meanings and materials, and further between culture, design and economy by legitimizing, for example new services in the interplay of production and consumption. My contribution here is of identifying and promoting the service designer as a practitioner with unique competence in constructing and conveying meaning through the service offerings and details that are designed.

As seen in Chapter 4, I also indicate that key users and service personnel that operate within popular cultural services also perform cultural intermediary roles, which could be further explored and elaborated in a Service Design view. I return to this later in this chapter.

5.4 Reflections

5.4.1 Reflexive, explorative and dynamic design research

My findings and contributions from this study have been brought forward through practice-led research that has been reflexive, explorative and dynamic. The research design of this study has facilitated new knowledge through exposing interdisciplinary connections, and directions towards a cultural understanding of Service Design, yet may have been limited by this diversity of concepts and theories. The structure of this design inquiry has allowed me to inquire my research questions in real life business contexts, and through teaching students, which has brought upon multiple views and thick descriptions of the area of study. However, student engagement and situated practice can be limited by factors such as time- and expectation management, or concerns in regards to conflicting views of commercial vs. educational vs. personal values. The outcomes that are of both practical and theoretical nature, can potentially trigger new conversations or expand practice, yet it could be that Service Design in developing onward will turn in alternate directions. In the following section I offer reflections upon some methodological limitations of this study.

5.4.2 Limitations of this study

These contributions have come forward through a qualitative mode of research through design inquiry, in which I have engaged with combining roles of both designer and researcher, seen as the strength of design research (Krogh et. al., 2015). This has contributed to the view of 'popular cultural service design', as well as the practice oriented approach and tool, shaped from within the field, through design. There are both strengths and limitations to researching into a field that the researcher is familiar with, as I have been through my former practice, and personal interests in matters of popular cultural lifestyles.

On one hand the strengths of this study of using my professional design specific skillsets, and positioning myself as a cultural intermediary in an expert position of 'reading' popular culture, may also have been limiting to this study in terms of preconceptions of certain aspects, or in terms of assumptions of shared understandings, for example in dialogue with partners or students. This may also have blinded me to matters that perhaps have been 'obvious' to me in a known context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), and as such certain facets may have been overlooked or not fully unpacked.

5.4.2.1 Limitations of research design

The explorative and dynamic nature of this transdisciplinary inquiry, has allowed for the research design to flux in line with new findings, new concepts and also new partnerships, as the research study has unfolded. As Reich (2017) notes, the requirements of real situations are not fixed, and as the research is designed, the research itself changes. This has provided a flexible framework that has aided researching what is emergent, and constantly changing, at times shifting direction, or including new themes, concepts and literature.

I reflect upon the limitations of this study in regards to how I have drawn from wide spanning topics within diverse domains in the attempt to weave together views, theories and concepts from multiple disciplines to arrive at new connections that I propose bear significance for Service Design, yet this may have limited this study in terms of becoming to broad or dispersed. In hindsight, my research may have benefited from narrowing down its focus, for example by framing my initial research questions contextually, which may have helped direct this inquiry in beneficial ways.

The multiple aims of this research, in contributing to theory by building new connections, to practice by developing an approach and tool, as well as inquiring the role of the service designer may also have diverted this study in too many directions. All though these aspects are interlinked, focusing on only one of these aspects could perhaps have yielded more elaborated results. Yet, my findings and contributions brought upon by this dynamic mode of research has initiated the teasing out of an area of Service Design and relations to popular culture that was without much previous study, and has become through the messy process of design-led research (Yee, 2018).

5.4.2.2 Limitations of student participation

Certain limitations can also be discussed in regards to including students in research. Bocar (2009) outlines the limitations of time and stress manage-ment, interpersonal relations, or level of personal dedication to studies of students in research processes. Norms, behaviours and expectations due to cultural experience, personal identity and social factors differ from student to student, and may also affect the research study in terms of dedication or engagement with the topic, or in interactions with external resources (Maunder et. al., 2012).

To manage student expectations and time limitations, clear timelines and briefs were provided. Continous dialogue with, and presentations for partners offered valuable feedback throughout the design process, and external guest lecturers were brought in to offer new perspectives, contributing to create student engagement with the area of study. The students' diverse cultural and educational backgrounds advanced multiple perspectives. I also observed how some students were naturally more attuned to an academic and analytical mindset, whereas other individuals were more conceptual and practice-oriented, also contributing to diverse views. Most had limited experience with working with commercial partners, and of formal knowledge of trends and practice with trend transformation. In light of this, the study might have showed different results if operationalizing the *Trendslation* approach with professional service design practitioners.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) propose how students can be viewed as experts when inquiring matters of popular culture, as they are embedded in 'the spirit of time', and can bring upon novel results through the way they make meaning via the dynamics of popular culture. Overall, I have found that the experience of including students in this research inquiry indeed has opened for fruitful, interesting and inspiring discussions, dynamics and design results with a high level of engagement and commitment, that helped me gain insight into the students' contextual knowledge and design processes.

On a personal level I also encountered limitations at times, in navigating my own dynamic roles of practitioner and educator, negotiating between my own findings and knowledge and the transference of these into learning situations. For me, this was a process of learning by doing, or learning by teaching, and as such there may have been pedagogical limitations, which possibly has influenced the overall study.

5.4.2.3 Limitations of commercial partnerships

In regards to partnering with commercial business organizations there have been both practical limitations, and limitations in regards to value creation. Practically, issues such as time-management, traveling, negotiating meetings and access to resource persons, and approval processes of e.g. contracts may have impacted the study as to efficiency and directional changes due to time restrictions. Also, matters of confidentiality may have limited the scope of this research, and/or impacted the dissemination of this research, in regards of details that have been disclosed.

In terms of value-creation, organizations often focus more on the value of the formal outcomes, such as the concept or service, which may have diverted attention from the value of the informal moves that have taken place, such as micro shifts in personal and company mindset (Heape, 2015). Such small shifts, expressed through, for example, adoption of design terminology, or gestures and interactions between resource persons, have been valuable to me in a research perspective as they have contributed to my understanding of internal processes and uptake of practice, however this may not have been consciously recognized by the partners involved, nor by the organization as a whole. This could have been addressed by adopting more formal ways of exposing the current status of organizational service design competence by way of in depth interviews, with resources persons at the start and end of the inquiries, or by mapping communication timelines throughout the process, to expose and capture these valuable, yet small shifts, and connect these to a wider organizational understanding.

5.5 Creating new connections

5.5.1 Popular cultural relevance in a broader Service Design view

This research, as summarized above, lifts forward how services are increasingly embedded in our everyday lives, affecting people's experiences and expectations responding to changing conditions, attuned to and directed through, contemporary culture. Following this line of a popular cultural connection to the field, poses additional questions regarding the relevance of such a cultural framing also in other research and practice-oriented areas where Service Design currently largely operates. I question, for example, if, and to what extent the experiential, meaningful and popular cultural could be beneficial and bare significance to areas within, for example, banking and insurance, or within public sectors. What role may a view such as popular cultural service design have in the field and practice forward?

5.5.2 From private to public

In banking, new digital services are changing consumption patterns and practices in line with shifting consumer needs, new technology and changing cultural conditions. This can be seen in novel banking services that enable direct connections between brands and users via banking apps, allowing swift one-click online purchases, or through services specifically catered to the consumption habits of the millennial generation, or to the needs of a growing culture of young entrepreneurs in creative domains. In Covid-19 times, in

the UK and Norway, for example, the massive provision and use of contactless payment and click-and-collect services has occurred. Another example is how the UK-based financial service ANNA[15] brings together aspects of service design, media and the creative economy. The banking service offers the combination of a business account, invoicing software, small business accounting, and tax services, specifically targeted at creative professionals. The platform interfaces include playful illustrations and a friendly tone-of-voice, communicating finances in a more conceivable manner.

The service further extends the experiential through offering insight into everyday life as a small business owner through their Instagram account, as well as providing handy guides for life as an entrepreneur. Such a culturally attuned banking service, I believe, indicates possibilities that lie within the more traditional and transactional service sectors to design and develop services that are in line with contemporary lifestyles.

The work described in this thesis has mainly operated within a commercial context. However, during my teaching, as part of my related work at my host institution, I have been engaged in courses, and held workshops, to introduce trend awareness and experiential focus for students at AHO working with design for public services. Together these have provided insights that have made me contemplate a number of issues that I discuss in the following section, in regards to public healthcare and public transport. I go on to question the relevance of such experience-centricity, and contemporary cultural alignment, in public services.

5.5.3 Popular cultural alignment in public healthcare services

In several respects, healthcare is an area that is already merging with elements of popular culture, as health and wellbeing are growing as cultural trends, impacting consumer and lifestyle domains in the market. This creates new connections between private and public. In the early conceptual work of the third design exploration in my research, health related trends were used to develop service ideas that offered services between the brand, products, social media and preventative measures for both physical and mental health. With blurring boundaries between popular culture, brands, lifestyle and health, perhaps notions of meaning-construction and experiential factors

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15   See https://anna.money

could be transferrable to public healthcare services, for example by inspiring motivation and engagement towards preventive healthcare.

The question arises as to whether public healthcare services could potentially benefit from a cultural experiential view. This is not in the sense, perhaps, of creating "desirable" experiences per se, as I acknowledge that certainly many healthcare services are ones we would appreciate not having to use. However, some aspects of a popular cultural service experience view might assist in conveying the current perceptions and notions of, for example, the meaning of care, attentiveness or professionalism. Public healthcare could perhaps adopt some 'ingredients', such as by developing a specific tone-of-voice, the design of meaning-constructing touchpoints, or the use of social media for information or motivation. It would appear that there may be useful conversations to be held on the meanings and mechanisms of the cultural and experiential in public healthcare related Service Design.

I believe it is likely only a question of time before these discussions spring into full bloom, as commercial actors are moving into areas of healthcare. In the public healthcare context of Norway, and further afield, whether we like it or not, healthcare is becoming increasingly commercialized. Established brands are starting to offer healthcare services, and at the same time harvesting personal medical data, and influencing healthcare practices between digital and physical spaces. One example is Amazon Care,[16] a healthcare service for Amazon employees and their families in Seattle in the US. Care offers 'the best of both virtual and in-person care' in a country where public healthcare is not easily accessible for all, such as in the Nordic countries. The service provides a cross-platform experience that signifies care and expertise offering virtual consultations, in-person meetings with healthcare professionals and a courier service that delivers prescribed medication. There are of course immense ethical considerations to take into account regarding global corporations accessing healthcare data, yet commercial healthcare service experiences could perhaps bring new perspectives also to public healthcare providers. The dynamics of the Covid-19 global pandemic only heightens the need for careful and communicative strategies and connections of Service Design and healthcare, in supporting innovation through services that enable new practices and shape behaviours, such as related to teaching, testing and integrated public policy.

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16   See https://www.amazon.care

Service Design could investigate into the relations and cultural relevance of such influential interplay between healthcare, service design, political cultural economy, branding, and popular meanings and practices. This may bring new discussions into light, ones that may have relevance for public healthcare services, for example, to strengthen the perception of public healthcare services that are not only experiential, but as work in this area suggest, matters of care, quality and involvement (Freire & Sangiorgi, 2010).

5.5.4 Popular cultural alignment in public transport services

Service Design is also primed to further explore areas between popular private and public culture. One example from the market in this intersection is the collaboration between Berlin's main company for public transport, BVG (Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe) and the sports and lifestyle brand adidas. In 2018 the collaboration resulted in the launch of The Ticket Shoe. This was a limited release of 500 pairs of sneakers, double-functioning as a one-year free pass to BVG's public transport services. The initiative intended to inspire young people to use public transport (Young, 2018, January 16). The design of the shoes reflected BVG's identity, and according to one customer "represent how you feel about the city" (Young, 2018, January 16). The coveted sneaker was sold at a specifically curated store that itself could be seen as cultural institutions, and launched with a promotional video, creating a wave of engagement amongst the target user group, generating 32 million video views, 323 million social likes, and a total of 10,6 billion media impressions.

The signifying aspects of the product itself offered a significant amount of cultural capital in a community of sneaker collectors. This can of course be viewed as a mere marketing initiative, however, I find it reveals interesting aspects concerning the dynamic shaping between the private and public, between a global brand, local public actors and distributed cultural communities, also highlighting notions of unique city cultures and city branding, in a mesh of popular public and cultural meaning.

Public services are part of our everyday cultural lives and lifestyles, impacting the ways in which we move around in the city. At the same time, public transport is increasingly operating in an ever more competitive market, as new private actors within mobility services appear, such as through car sharing, private lifts or electric scooter hire. Perhaps there could be opportunities for public transport services to adopt a popular cultural and trend-driven

service design approach, to transform their offerings or key touchpoints in line with the shifting needs and expectations of the public.

My main point in bringing forward these areas and examples is to accentuate how the connection between Service Design and popular culture can potentially have relevance also in non-commercial contexts. One additional question that surfaces is whether this cultural connectivity implies a large-scale move for the entire field, or a small significant step in a new direction. In one sense it could be that such a turn towards cultural concepts and connections could move the whole field in a new and more culturally conscious direction. However, it may be that such a cultural foregrounding rather means that a new branch of Service Design is emerging, creating a narrower, yet specialized direction. Either way, I believe that a wider cultural understanding of the nature and uses of services, including the contemporary and popular, can contribute to a field that is in constant development.

5.5.5 Introducing a trend-driven approach in Service Design education

These changing conditions that Service Design is constantly negotiating, may lead to further implications for an evolving Service Design education. Through this thesis I argue for the notion of the service designer as a cultural intermediary. If the field is to connect more to cultural areas, the consequences of this may be that Service Design education, too, needs to take a turn towards the cultural, creative and conceptual.

I have suggested how the cultural intermediary service designer actively contributes to translate, synthesize and communicate cultural meaning and value through their semantic transformation of cultural trends into service design offerings and details. These design decisions are driven by design knowledge, experience, and intuition, and may prompt new questions about the service designer's need for developing a 'popular cultural knowledge-base' when designing in this cultural sphere. I am interested in whether the role as a 'curator of meaning' could be further explored and developed, in an educational framing. To cater for this Service Design education could enhance modes of trend-driven innovation as a supplement to user-driven innovation. Simple trend forecasting techniques could be introduced into Service Design education to develop cultural expertise, and to build competence in reading trends, to identify emerging needs and values, in addition to expressed user needs.

Through my teaching and tutoring it became apparent to me that many students intuitively embody a high trend awareness and sensitivity, as designers often do, yet many lack a vocabulary and formalized means to materialize the intangibility of trends into their work. By introducing the Trendslation approach more fully, the students may better grasp the intangible and meaningful aspects, by iterative loops of observing, discussing and visualizing, and further implement this in their work. In Chapter 3 I note how students that were trained in visual communication seemed more capable of bringing their design work further. It could be that students with former design or visual training possess a higher level of trust in their subjective and intuitive interpretations of meaning, rather than searching for one "right" answer. This may suggest that developing strong visualization skills is part of shaping the expert service designer cultural intermediary.

Following this, it may be that subjects from visual communication could be more fully integrated throughout Service Design education to assist in skills for 'reading' semantic codes in the transformation process, to develop strong aesthetic and stylistic story-telling skills in designing visual narratives that support their work, and to develop textured conceptual and design-rich service representations to prompt innovation. Hernández et al. (2018, p. 266) pose that "Design language, indeed, is the language of innovation". The service designer cultural intermediary needs to develop an apt design language for designing innovative service solutions for the lifestyle and creative industry sector.

5.5.6 Shifting role of the cultural intermediary service designer

A culturally enriched toolbox and designer language may equip the service designer in the role of cultural intermediary to partake in facilitating cross-silo organizational engagement in regards to matters of socio-ecological and political urgency, centered on the contemporary needs and experiences of the customer. My engagement with partners in the PhD project, also in my current practice, shows that culturally located brands and businesses can benefit from building cross-disciplinary teams across, for example, product design, marketing, management and service design competency. This may mean that a potential role for the service designer in larger commercial organizations may be situated between the marketing and design teams. The service designer may also act as an intermediary between cultural material, brand values, economic factors and cultural innovation.

However, the service designer will likely meet challenges of the commercial industry such as economic constraints and organizational mindsets that are anchored in decade long traditions of product centricity. Developing new services is resource consuming, and the return of investment is not as easily measured as for examples with products, as the impact and value exchange may first surface when the service is in use. Organizations may not be mature to develop and implement full-scale service solutions, however, designing conceptual service solutions can be used to think through needed processes and directions. One way forward may be to experientially prototype conceptual services in smaller scale, to gain real time feedback, data and insights into use. The design of such service prototypes becomes critical in working to attract and engage target users by reflecting contemporary values and needs.

In the commercial lifestyle industry there is still a long way towards achieving sustainable practices. However, I advocate for a view that suggests that the service designer may take an intermediary role that can assist in making more tangible a holistic view of potential paths forward. I also suggest that trend-driven service design could offer a starting point for developing organizational understandings towards experience-centricity. This, I believe, calls for the need to cultivate the designer's ability to identify unknown and uncovered needs by looking at long-term phenomena (e.g. cultural trends) to identify meanings that may emerge in the future (Korper et al., 2018). To do so is to engage not only as a facilitator for innovation, but as one who is paramount to the creative processes of meaning innovation (Verganti, 2008).

5.6 Future research

5.6.1 Looking forward

Through this research I have come across areas that I have found interesting and relevant, but that I have not gone further into, so as to keep within the scope of my defined research questions and areas. In my view, a more contemporary, cultural and semantic view in Service Design illuminates multiple interesting new areas for future research. This could be connected to inquiries into popular cultural influence in organizational culture, investigations of sub cultures of services, or drawing up frameworks for Service Design cultures and cultures of Service Design, to mention a few. I next offer two aspects that I find are closely related to this work, and that outline two possible areas for future research.

5.6.2 Towards anticipatory Service Design?

In a business practice view, the work with the partners in my study unveiled how the conceptual service design work could perform as organizational change agents. The Service Design artefacts that we created functioned as conversation pieces that challenged the current product-focus into possible experiential opportunities. The students engaged in the third design research exploration were given the task to design for services with a five-year future horizon. This is still a relatively short time span, however the notion of foreseeing future needs and values raised discussions of how trends could be used to predict further into the future, for example by anticipating counter- or anti trends. Trends are often cyclical, and following large-scale trends, anti-trends may emerge. Such anti-trends could be connected to the development of an area of more speculative Service Design. Speculating in such counter trends may offer the conceptualization of future possibilities that potentially can assist in reframing organizational mindsets.

Following such observations in Publication 4, Andrew Morrison and I frame an area for further research in this publication that advocates for closer connections between Service Design, innovation, business design and future studies. This could take on the shape as 'Anticipatory Service Design'. This would draw Service Design into deeper dialogues with the practice and study of culturally infused innovation, including extending this to emergent trends and cultural expressions. This direction could be developed more towards a futures oriented service view.

5.6.3 Service Design and emerging economic concepts

A second area that emerged in the experience of working with major business partners was how the actual act of service designing could contribute in the turn towards new economic concepts and business models. There is an increase of focus on business model innovation in commercial industries, such as within the fashion retail sector (Perlacia et al., 2017). Partners that I have worked with throughout this inquiry, and also in my current practice, show great interest in the design of services that can prompt new streams of revenue, including models for collaborative consumption, such as renting or modes of sharing (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Yet, I find there is still a need for operationalizing means of how to actually design for these new services and experiences that introduce new business models. Within sustainable fashion Vehmas et al. (2018) note that in a turn towards collaborative business models, new services can contribute to add value, yet, the authors

note how this requires a comprehensive understanding of customer needs and expectations to create motivation and engagement on a personal level, through, for example symbolic and experiential benefits. Such emerging views may point towards an opportunity for Service Design to create links to business model innovation with regards to the design for popular cultural experiences in consumer-oriented domains to convey such symbolic and experiential value.

Service Design has long argued for its experience economical connection, however economic models and concepts are continuously in flux. Over the years that the field and practice of Service Design has evolved, new economic concepts have also emerged. Today, this is perhaps most apparent in the increased focus on the so-called circular economy (MacArthur, 2013). A closer connection between Service Design and changing cultural and economic conditions could imply that there is a need for the field to now move beyond its experience economic focus. The field could develop more dynamic views and models that can bridge Service Design with new economic concepts and models as these arise. Trend-driven approaches could as such, additionally take into consideration shifting economic trends where values are in flux, centered on regeneration, reuse and calls for de-growth.

Today, the introduction of new business models that enable users to co-create value, or that enable new work forces, such as through customer-to-customer service platforms, are influencing current economic conditions. I believe this raises important questions regarding Service Design and a deeper understanding of legislation and regulation. Lifestyle oriented services (e.g. Über, Airbnb and Foodora) offer opportunities for a new group of service workers. However, recent years have seen an increase of related political debate, and service worker strikes, fighting for economic and social rights in several major cities across the world (Kollewe, 2019, May 8; Vissgren, 2019, August 19). This may indicate that the development of many culturally located services today mainly focus on the needs of the end user, without taking into consideration the wider needs of the new intermediary work force that the services enable.

Further, such aspects could imply that Service Design needs an expanding awareness in regards to legislation and regulation, bringing the field closer to the realms of political economy. Consequentially this could contribute to create new paths between popular cultural service design, business model innovation and the realms of a wider cultural political economy (Best & Paterson, 2010).

Political economies and their cultural referents are themselves, today, in transition in the face of climate change, resource re-use and the context of 'circular economic' views (e.g., De los Rios & Charnley, 2017). Sustainable fashion theory has brought forward the potentials of Service Design competency for conceptualising, visualising and realising service offerings in line with emerging, possibly circular, economic models (Niinimäki, 2017). This brings up aspects of Service Design in a circular economic framing for businesses in the shift from product to service centricity. I think there exists significant potential in connecting Service Design and aspects of circular economy more closely. Developing this symbiosis could suggestively be termed 'Circular Service Design', which could investigate circular potentials from a Service Design perspective, in shaping more sustainable consumption and production practices that resonate with, and are a contributory part of, cultural meaning and value.

5.7 In conclusion

This thesis has presented a design-based exploration of Service Design as being realized culturally in areas connected to lifestyle and consumption. I have shown how services are entangled in our everyday lives through relations to popular practices, influencing and impacting popular culture, while at the same time being shaped through the uptake of cultural material. Up until now, Service Design has not engaged in larger discussions of its cultural positioning, relevance and reflexivity. However, services enable networks of people, products, technology, media, and new practices in which cultural meaning and value is shaped in ongoing dynamic and circular processes. The larger area of Design has developed an understanding of such cultural negotiation between the designer, products and use, and Interaction Design has shifted focus from infrastructure, to digitization, data and its uses as cultural phenomena and practices. So too, may Service Design be viewed as moving from a predominantly management and strategic focus, to one of engagement and experience that is located in personal, interpersonal and cultural practices.

My study highlights the potential of experiential and trend-sensitive Service Design that is communicative, creative, and conceptual, that can prompt the design of novel services, which themselves can be read as popular cultural expressions. Such services reflect popular attitudes that contribute to the interplay between contemporary culture, service design and new media. They do so performatively, through references, expressions and practices that exist in, and between, a mediatized and branded, urban and dynamic landscape. Adopting such a Service Design cultural view could assist businesses and

brands in actively engaging experiential and meaning-driven factors, to inspire and motivate people in the co-construction of new cultural meanings, and enactment of new cultural practices.

In conclusion, I suggest that taken together, these responses offer a connection between Service Design and Popular Culture that accentuates the experiential as necessary and relevant in the ongoing evolvement of Service Design. Seen together with the published work, and ongoing doctoral thesis by Matthews (2017; 2020), in which he explores the innovation potentials of the symbolic and ritualistic as cultural material, these closely related studies draw up new sections and interdisciplinary connections that frame an area of meaning-centered and culturally sensitive Service Design. The contributions of this thesis should be seen as indicative steps towards developing the field and its cultural reflexivity. Returning to the title of this thesis, we may say that a 'refashioning of Service Design' is dependent on collaborative cross-disciplinary efforts that together can reorient, redefine, and, in a sense, redesign aspects of Service Design to endure the ever-shifting dynamics of both services and culture.

I hope that my account has indeed provided a multi-layered contribution to theory, practice and business, and that it may help frame services themselves as cultural acts more broadly. I suggest that these are acts that may be seen in lifting forward services as part of the ways culture is increasingly connected through design. This brings me to my final concluding remark: well-designed services that are culturally inflected, experienced and performed, engage us culturally, experientially and emotionally.

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Figure 1.1 – Conflict Kitchen (n.d.) Cuban, Iranian and Venezualean events. Website. December 1, 2016, from conflictkitchen.org. Screenshot by author.

Figure 1.2 – Conflict Kitchen (n.d.) Homepage. Website. Retrieved December 1, 2016, from conflictkitchen.org. Screenshot by author.

Figure 1.3 (main image) – Conflict Kitchen [@conflictkitchen]. (2016, April 29) Guest instagramer MohammadReza Akhoondi @mrakhoondi. My Grandmother prepares watermelon for her grandchildren who have come to see their grandma and grandpa at the weekend [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://instagram.com/conflictkitchen?igshid=n917j9w0vy07

Figure 1.4 – Conflict Kitchen (2013) Conflict Kitchen weekly billboard. Website. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from https://www.conflictkitchen.org/2013/05/31/conflict-kitchen-weekly-billboard/

Figure 3.27 (main image) – Goodyear, T. (2016) Bmx, all city. Website. Retrieved May 18, 2018, from https://endless-mag.com

Figure 4.3 – Maxfield LA [@maxfieldla]. (2017, February 10.) #VETEMENTSxMAXFIELD "DRY CLEANING" // @vetements_official #vetements #maxfieldla #maxfield [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BQV9BbbA7N2/?igshid=n6fne4typf91

Figure 4.4 – Maxfield LA [@maxfieldla]. (2017, February 10.) #VETEMENTSxMAXFIELD "DRY CLEANING" Tonight 8PM-12AM // @vetements_official #vetements #maxfieldla #maxfield [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BQT3naoAIA-/?igshid=1e38merafd49q

Figure 4.5 – Maxfield LA [@maxfieldla]. (2017, February 8.) #VETEMENTSxMAXFIELD // February 9, 8pm-12am, Maxfield 8825 Melrose Ave. Free Entry to All @vetements_official #vetements #VETEMENTSxMAXFIELD #maxfieldla #maxfield [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BQO_uy-gsWi/?igshid=1qu9du2gs2d8x

Figure 4.6 – Nirui, A. [@avanope]. (2018, May 14.) Untitled [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved from https//instagram.com/avanope?igshid=31guqkijpv0.

Publication 1

Dennington, C. (2017). Service design as a cultural intermediary. Translating cultural phenomena into services. *The Design Journal, 20*(suppl. 1), 600-613. https://doi.org/10.1080/146069 25.2017.1353008

Service Design as a Cultural Intermediary
Translating cultural phenomena into services

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Abstract: This paper expands existing service design and customer experience discourse by critically viewing service design through the lens of design as a cultural intermediary. Through a mixed methods approach, a triangulation of theoretical frameworks examines service design as a cultural intermediary, and what this might mean for this developing field. Examples of culturally aware services are discussed, to unpack the term *social awareness* as a cultural phenomenon, in relation to trend forecasting and meaning-driven innovation. A design case is included to further explore service design and cultural transformation, and the translation of cultural trends into service concepts. The outcome supports service design as a cultural intermediary, resulting in four main analytical findings: triple semantic transformation, meaning-driven concept innovation, experiential touch-points and experiential evidencing. The paper concludes that service design needs to develop its role as a cultural intermediary. This view is currently lacking in today's service design discourse.

Keywords: Service design, service innovation, cultural intermediary, value, social awareness

1. Introduction

Service design is a relatively young field within the field of design, but has established itself in practice and research over the past decade. Service design theory (Kimbell, 2011; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2014), tools (Blomkvist & Bode, 2012; Segelström, 2010) and methods (Clatworthy, 2011; Miettinen, Rontti, Kuure, & Lindström, 2012) are gaining wider traction, and service design is making its way into government organizations ('Service Design in Government 2017', n.d.), the public sector (http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/), school classrooms (https://www.service-design-network.org/study-service-design) and business boardrooms (Reason, Løvlie & Flu, 2016).

Service design has been defined as "designed offerings to provide experiences that happen over time and across different touch-points" (Clatworthy, 2013, p.19). In this view, a focus on experience, specifically the customer experience, has contributed to the attention that service design is now receiving from the business world, and where this work is situated (csi.nhh.no).

This paper explores the role of service design as a cultural intermediary, in light of socio-cultural trends. It originated with an observation that whilst the field of product design presents designed artefacts as cultural intermediaries (Krippendorff, 2005; Press & Cooper, 2003) and marketing presents brands as cultural influencers (Holt, 2004), service design does not discuss how service design may act as a cultural intermediary. Yet, innovative services and concepts that seem to be translating cultural phenomena into service offerings are appearing in the market. Could the exploration of service design as a cultural intermediary expand service design discourse, and in turn impact the innovation capabilities of businesses?

2. Exploring service design as a cultural intermediary

2.1 Paper Outline

In this paper I present theory regarding design and brands as cultural intermediaries, to introduce the concept of cultural reflexivity in design. I use existing examples from the market to show instances of services that are culturally initiated, albeit not through service design. A discussion of how service design can assist in the translation of cultural phenomena into details of services is presented to show it may deliver customer experiences in line with identified socio-cultural trends. An example is presented, using *Prefall*, a personal service design project to indicate how such trends might stimulate a service design solution. These individual parts are brought together in a closing discussion about how service design could, and should, embrace the role it has as a cultural intermediary, and the implications this may have for research and practice.

2.2 Methodology and methods

To investigate the cultural role of service design, I used a bricolage approach (Yee & Bremner, 2011) of mixed methods. A literature review examined the relation of design and branding to cultural intermediary. Theoretical frameworks were triangulated and applied to service design for further investigation of the translation of cultural trends into service concepts, together with a study of existing examples of culturally aware services in the market. First-stage testing of forecasting methods unpacked the cultural phenomenon of *social awareness*. Initial qualitative interviews were conducted to enquire into the interest for the identified area of service design and cultural intermediary. To further explore this area, a design intervention was carried out using the methodology of Research by Design (Sevaldson, 2010), in which the researcher participates as a designer. Through this design work four analytical findings surfaced, which are presented in the final section of this paper.

3. Theoretical framings

3.1 Cultural intermediaries in the creative industries

Maguire and Matthews (2014) describe cultural intermediaries as "the taste makers defining what counts as good taste and cool culture in today's marketplace", when discussing different creative domains that mediate culture. Venkatesh and Meamber (2006) describe cultural intermediaries as individuals or organizations that transfer meaning. The notion of the cultural intermediary, whether a person, product, organization or other, builds on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction, and how the cultural consumption of the 'new petite bourgeoisie' shaped the taste of individuals aspiring their status and cultural knowledge. Through the following sections I attempt to

clarify the term in relation to product design, and within cultural branding, to highlight in what way I believe existing theories of cultural intermediary may be relevant for service design.

3.2 Design and the designer as cultural intermediaries

Many of today's products are no longer designed solely based on functionality. Cooper and Press (2003) describe how culture is embodied and transformed into designed objects, and discuss how the designer makes meaning possible through design. By enabling meaning through these objects, the designer becomes a maker of culture, a cultural intermediary. In product design discourse, the study of meaning (semantics), has been approached to understand how meaning is signified, and interpreted through designed artefacts. Krippendorff and Butter (1984) termed this *product semantics.* Through product semantics, designed artefacts can function as cultural intermediaries, in the way they are influenced by culture. Krippendorff (2005) supports Cooper and Press's view of designed artefacts conveying meaning, and argues for a movement from pure functional design to a focus on what the designed artefacts mean to users, terming this *the semantic turn*. Krippendorff discusses how the designer interprets cultural tendencies, translating these into physical elements of design such as shape, material, texture and colour.

The three-legged *Juicy Salif* lemon squeezer by Phillip Stark is an example where meaning is embedded through form and aesthetics, and the experience of using it surpasses its functionality. Julier (2001) discusses how meaning is constructed and represented in an on-going process between design and culture, and how the *Juicy Salif* moves from the functional object of a utilitarian lemon squeezer (Figure 1), to an object of contemplation and admiration (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Functional - Chef Inox Stainless Steel Citrus Squeezer. Figure 2. Emotional - Juicy Salif, by Phillip Stark for Alessi. Image from www.petersofkensington.com.au   Image from www.panik-design.com

Crane (2012, p. 2) writes how fashion products can "be viewed as a vast reservoir of meanings". If indeed designed services act as cultural intermediaries, in the same way that designed artefacts do, what are the vast reservoirs of meaning in services, and how are they embodied through service design? If product semantics are a way of embedding meaning, how can we understand the semantics of services?

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3.3 Cultural branding and brands as cultural intermediaries

Holt (2004) describes cultural relevance in relation to brands, through what he terms 'cultural branding' and 'iconic brands'. Holt explains how brands that successfully encapsulate cultural references can become iconic; in the way they translate cultural phenomena into brand specific details such as campaigns or products, thus presenting brands as cultural intermediaries. Within branding theory, the creation of *cultural capital* is discussed as the most valued resource customers receive through brand consumption, based on Bourdieu's theory (1984) of cultural knowledge as a form of currency. Cultural capital can be accumulated and displayed through signals, attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours and/or goods consumed, as Lamont and Lareau summarize (1988). Already in 1899, *conspicuous consumption* was theorized by Veblen, regarding upper-class individual's consumption of leisure activities, goods and services as a way of displaying wealth, and thereby social status (Trigg, 2001). With a shift of focus from owning products to using services (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2014) how can individuals 'conspicuously' consume services to acquire value such as cultural capital? What are the identity-building symbols of services, and could the semantics of services then be discussed in relation to the brand construct of a service?

3.4 From brand values to service semantics

Karjalainen (2004) explores how the designer translates brand values into products through design, and terms this *semantic transformation*. Through this transformation, certain brand characteristics are translated into products, and help create 'product families', products that relate to each other design-wise, such as Apple's products (Figure 3).
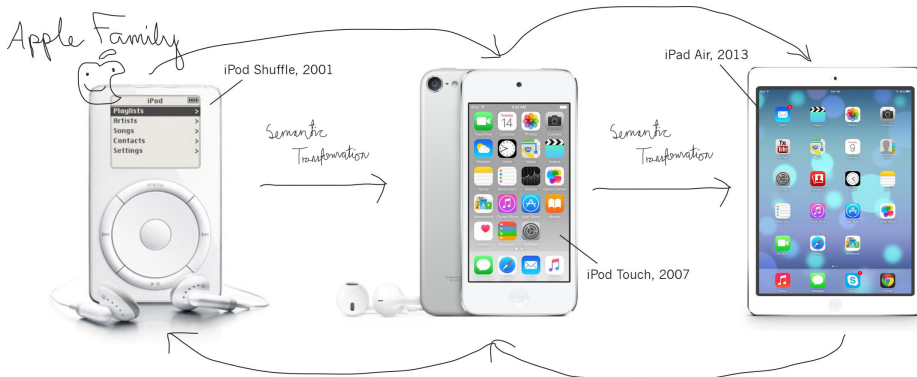
Figure 3. Vizualisation of the Semantic Transformation in Apple's product family. Illustration by Claire Dennington 2016

To account for the transition from brand into service, Clatworthy (2009) developed the conceptual model of the Brand Megaphone. The model illustrates how a brand's core values are amplified through the service personality, which again are transformed into details of a service, such as touch-points, behaviours and tone-of-voice. To assist in this transition da Motta Filho (2012) developed a draft Brand Experience Manual that contains guides for the translation of a brand into service, naming this translation a *brandslation* (Figure 4). This manual supports the need for further exploration of the translation of values into details of service design, which could be achieved through a cultural approach. As service design strongly relates to branding (Clatworthy, 2012), and brands are presented as cultural influencers and translators of cultural phenomena (Holt, 2004) we

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can ask where the cultural branding discourse lies within service design, and how service design may assist in the translation of cultural phenomena.
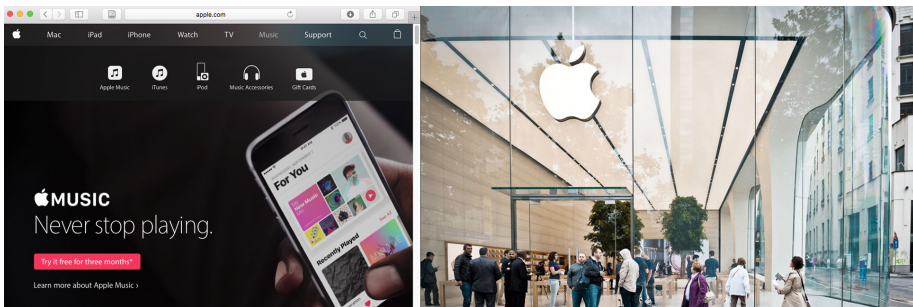
Figure 4. Brandslation - Apple translates the brand into details of service, such as Apple Music and physical Apple stores. Images from www.apple.com (screenshot) and www.designboom.com (by Bruno Dalimonte)

4. Service design + culture – a missing discourse

4.1 Service design discourse today

So far this paper has highlighted design and branding as cultural intermediaries, yet there seems to be little discussion around this topic within the field of service design. Maguire et al. (2014) present several domains within the creative industries as cultural intermediaries, including service-oriented industries such as fitness and book retailing. These they approach from a sociological perspective, but do not include cultural intermediary from a service design point of view. Popular service design books (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012; Kimbell, 2015; Reason, Løvlie & Flu, 2015) mention culture in short paragraphs, but there is a lack of more elaborated chapters on cultural constructions, influences and changes. The online retailer Amazon has no service design books listed under 'Culture'; instead they are listed under 'Industry' and 'Business & Money'.

Journals covering areas of design such as *Design Issues*, *Design and Culture*, *International Journal of Design* and the service design specific *Touchpoint Journal* have not yet published any articles up until the close of 2016 specifically addressing service design and culture, although a couple do mention services in relation to societal (Koo, 2016) and cultural (Manzini, 2016) contexts. A review of papers presented at the largest research conference for service design, ServDes (servdes.org), over the past five (and only) conferences, indicates that there has been no active discourse around service design as a cultural intermediary. Rather, the primary focus has been within the fields of business, computer science and engineering (Blomkvist, Overkamp & Holmlid, 2016).

4.2 An expanding discourse

However, adjoining areas such as social innovation (Mortati & Villari, 2014) and social entrepreneurship (Balis, 2014) may indicate emerging areas where service design is more culturally determined, as does the work of Meroni (2006) and Manzini (2008) on strategic design, new food networks and food-system innovation. The dominating view in service design, however, does not currently seem to be culturally oriented. Initial semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a few individuals internationally, from practice and research - within branding, design ethnography and service design - indicate there is support for the topic as being of interest. This is further reinforced

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through several informal conversations with service design practitioners as part of my own service design practice and research inquiries.

I would argue that the sum of these findings indicates the need for further exploration of service design as a cultural intermediary. Key to this is the question of if service design focuses upon its role in acting as a cultural intermediary, what could this actually mean for service design.

5. Culturally located examples

5.1 Culturally aware services and service offerings

Overall, my research into relations between service design and cultural intermediaries was initiated by the observation of interesting and innovative services and concepts appearing in the market. They seemingly offer more 'meaningful experiences' (Norton, 2003), acting as cultural intermediaries through the translation of socio-cultural phenomena into details of their services. To illustrate this, I next present examples drawn from international sources accessible online.

The dining concept *Conflict Kitchen* in Pittsburgh, solely serves cuisine from countries with which the US is in conflict. The concept's aim is to expand the engagement the public have with food, culture and politics by offering an experiential opportunity for customers to encounter another side of the conflicted country's story. The food and design elements shift alongside the represented country (Figure 5). In addition, talks, film screenings, concerts, and events such as virtual cooking classes are hosted, to involve customers' in 'more meaningful dining experience' (http://conflictkitchen.org).

Figure 5. Conflict Kitchen's shifting graphic design elements of the exterior. Here showing the Cuban, Iranian and Venezuelan concepts. Images from www.conflictkitchen.com

As a non-profit organization, all excess resources are re-invested in educational programs, performances and publications (Figure 6). By orchestrating several touch-points; the transactions between service and customer (Clatworthy, 2011) - such as the food, events and design elements, the concept offers an experience over time.

Figure 6. Shifting experiential touch-points. Example of publication and art installation during Conflict Kitchen's Iranian concept. Images from www.conflictkitchen.com

Established brands are also addressing societal issues through new service offerings. When IKEA launched the social kitchen *Kutchnia Spotkan* in Warsaw ('Retailer Community Kitchens', n.d.) - a large, fully equipped kitchen in a spacious city apartment - they were not only offering a space for people to get together to make and enjoy a meal, they were simultaneously addressing the issue of small, expensive living spaces in larger cities. It could be argued that IKEA is not only trying to sell furniture, but also explore how to create opportunities for customers to become involved in valuable experiences, in an innovative way that aligns with their brand proposition of "affordable solutions for better living" (ikea.com).

When dating service match.com (2015) saw that 3.1 million of their users listed "coffee and conversation" as an interest, they teamed up with Starbucks, and introduced "Meet at Starbucks", a one-click-coffee-date invitation feature with a chat function. That function enabled users visiting Starbucks to chat directly with other users there, creating experiential opportunity for people in our digital age to meet up in real life, adding individual value to the customer experience. Examples such as these prompt us to ask a number of questions about the dominant directions of service design discourse. Is this just a PR-stunt, or can it be seen as dabbling in the societal issues of loneliness and the fear of meeting face-to-face in today's digitalized society? Why is service design not central in developing concepts like these?

5.2 Service design as a cultural intermediary: transforming trends into offerings

Delivering customer-centric service experiences is key to gaining positive economic advantage for service providers. This places service design in relation to the experience economy (Pine, Gilmore, & others, 1998) from a business perspective. As customers are becoming more connected, aware and active (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2013), they are demanding more valuable and meaningful experiential opportunities (Norton, 2003). Several new terms seem to be branching out of the experience economy, such as *the expectation economy* (Mason, Mattin, Luthy, Dumitrescu, & Osterwalder, 2015) and *the conscience economy* (Overman, 2014), with a focus on clear conscience consumption. Can identifying what kind of culturally negotiated experiences customers demand, help service designers create value through new service offerings?

Seen in the light of innovative service concepts appearing in the market, I ask whether the identification of socio-cultural phenomena can assist service design in value creation. Socio-cultural phenomena could be viewed as *societal trends*, defined as "trends that relate to the social and cultural values and practices within a society." (trendsactive.com). Martin (2009) describes *trends* as

movements or directions that influence culture, society or the businesses they move through, and in e.g. fashion, *trend forecasting* is used to identify these movements, to deliver desirable products at the right time (Pettinger, 2014). Could forecasting methods be adjusted to help service design deliver desirable services, at the right time?

Through previous work, and in the initial phase of my research project, I have conducted first stage testing of forecasting methods, to explore if they may be adapted to service design. This identified the broad term of *social awareness* as a cultural phenomenon. I use this as a lens to investigate the act of building valuable relationships through the design of culturally aware services. By social awareness, I mean creating awareness around, for example, environmental, political, ethical, societal or health related issues. Identifying these directions could be a way of supporting the development of more innovative services that, in turn, offer more meaningful experiences. Verganti and Öberg (2013) use the term *meaning innovation* about design-driven innovation that can lead to meaningful experiences through added cultural, symbolic and emotional value. Can service innovation be seen as meaning driven innovation? And, can societal trends, such as social awareness be translated into details of service to create more meaningful experiences?

6. Translating social awareness into service details through design

A design intervention carried out by the author was enacted to explore the design of culturally negotiated services in the context of fashion. The outcome of this work, *Prefall* (prefall.com), is a service for buying/selling second-hand fashion, with inspirational digital and physical content addressing fashion re-use. Through this design work, four main findings emerged, which I will briefly describe under following headings: triple semantic transformation, meaning-driven concept innovation, experiential touch-points and experiential evidencing.

6.1 Triple semantic transformation

An overarching finding that surfaced while designing *Prefall* is how a multiple translation process occurs. Initially, the translation of the identified socio-cultural trend into meaning, then a translation of this meaning into the service concept, and finally the translation of the meaning-driven concept into details of the service, such as touch-points and experiential evidencing. This could be termed a triple semantic transformation (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2013) as part of service design, and is worthy of further investigation to develop the understanding of service design as a cultural intermediary.

6.2 Meaning-driven concept innovation

My second finding is that when working with the design of *Prefall*, I was not designing a new service concept based on customers' expressed needs or functional improvements; rather, I was working with the design of meaning into the service concept, acting as a cultural intermediary. Designing meaning into products is a central part of product design discourse and practice. Verganti (2009) discusses how meaning can be a driver for innovation through design, and Holt (2004) presents meaning-driven brands as cultural influencers.

Prefall translates social awareness into a new service concept, by identifying the cultural movement of growing awareness around fashion consumption, and combines reuse and the experience of a high fashion brand to translate fashion recycling into a highly experiential service, offering the opportunity for a more meaningful way of consuming fashion (Figure 6). Existing service design tools

and methods, as found in service design books, on sites such as *servicedesigntools.org*, or as taught in service design education, are not currently sufficient when designing new service concepts based on meaning, and cultural references and contexts.

Figure 6. The designer was working with the design of meaning when developing the fashion reuse concept Prefall. Here a press image from the launch of Prefall. Image by Renate Torseth.

6.3 Experiential touch-points

My third finding is that when designing meaning-driven service concepts, there is a need to design highly experiential touch-points in strong alignment with the concept and brand values, which also translate the identified trend. During the design work it became apparent how the translation of *Prefall's* brand values into digital and physical touch-points needed to embody different levels of meaning to offer different levels of value outtake for the customer, through the experiential characteristics of each touch-point, to reinforce the meaning-driven concept (Figure 7). An example of such experiential touch-points is *Prefall's* short fashion videos (vimeo.com/prefall) connecting the aspiration for a certain fashion style with promotion for fashion re-use, creating an aesthetic and visual experience in line with a high fashion brand. This finding supports Clatworthy's *brand megaphone* model (2009), however, there is still a gap in service design discourse that addresses this area in depth.

6.4 Experiential evidencing

The final finding is that during the design of a meaning-driven concept it became necessary to evidence the concept in a more experiential way, to test the experience of the intended meaning physically e.g. through pop-up concepts (Figure 8). Through this I was able to gain insight into the experience rapidly and assess the results of the translation of meaning. Evidencing, used as a tool for transforming intangible ideas into tangible evidence for assessment of future services (http://www.servicedesigntools.org), could be developed in a more emotional and experiential direction. This could be done through short-term physical spaces for testing the experience of certain service features that translate the identified cultural movement and brand values. In this way, the designer can continuously evaluate whether the translation of the intended meaning is a success, and also gain feedback from stakeholders and customers.

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Figure 7. Experiential touch-points. A physical guide with tips
for selling secondhand clothing. Image by Solveig Knudsen

Figure 8. Experiential evidencing. Prefall pop-up concept.
Image by Solveig Knudsen

7. Discussion – A move towards more culturally sensitive services

The findings indicate that service design can indeed act as a cultural intermediary. Examples of existing services also show that there is a cultural transformation of socio-cultural phenomena into services. However, these do not seem to be originating in service design, which may suggest an area to develop. The identified themes - triple semantic transformation, meaning-driven concept innovation, experiential touch-points and experiential evidencing - indicate an area of trend-driven service design that could be developed to build service design as a more culturally sensitive field. Yet, as of now, there is a lack of service design tools, methods and discourse oriented towards culturally initiated service design. Viewing service design, and the service designer as a cultural intermediary, could impact on the way service designers work in practice. It could do so through closer collaboration between service designers and the marketing team within businesses, or the need for in-house service designers in organizations and businesses. It might also allow for a stronger focus on developing service designers' creative skills and concept development in design education, enhancing the designer's ability of translation through design. Based on these reflections, I will now discuss some areas for further research.

First, I suggest the need for research into the development and application of a method or tool that could assist the design of more culturally sensitive services, through exploring in detail the elements of meaning-driven concept innovation.

Second, as new touch-points are surfacing, Clatworthy (2011) calls for more experiential touch-points, and Matthews (2015) suggests the inclusion of non-physical touch-points. To investigate the potential of more experiential touch-points, further research could look into different levels of translation, and in what way this may affect value outtake for customers.

Third, Matthews (2016) presents Graphic Experiential Evidencing as a visual tool for conveying brand experience and emotional response during service development. This focus on emotional response

was highly present when evidencing *Prefall*, where an extension into emotional and experiential evidencing was used as a way of translating social awareness into tangible evidence. I believe such an extension could help develop service design.

Finally, I suggest it may be valuable to introduce a more specific subset of cultural capital, in the light of current cultural phenomena, to an extended discursive understanding of service design. Through the design work with *Prefall*, a value-based term emerged: social awareness capital. I define this as a subset of cultural capital, offering customer value through socially aware service offerings. By identifying such a subset in the early stages of concept development, it could be used as a key variable measure, to assist service designers with the translation of cultural trends into new services.

8. Conclusion

This paper explores service design as a cultural intermediary, and in what way cultural phenomena can be translated into services. The findings from this explorative research, approached through the mixed methods of a literature review, first-stage interviews, examples from the market and my own design work indicate that service design can, and should, act as a cultural intermediary. Further, it is likely that we can expect an increasing focus on this angle, as the number of services that relate to cultural phenomena is expanding.

Service design as a cultural intermediary is a view that seems to be missing in current service design discourse, with a current functional and process oriented focus. This work presents initial explorative research, and as such should be seen as indicative. The empirical findings align, and clearly pinpoint, an area of relevance worthy of further study. I believe this may be a step toward starting a relevant and important discourse within service design concerning its cultural reflexivity. As a contribution to this discussion there is a need to explore the identified areas of meaning-driven service innovation, experiential touch-points and experiential evidencing more extensively. To investigate the potential of cultural transformation in service design as a means for service innovation, there is a particular need to carry out further design-initiated interventions.

Further research could explore the triple semantic transformation process: how the service designer acts as a cultural intermediary through the translation of socio-cultural trends into meaning, and how service design acts as a cultural intermediary through the translation of meaning into the service concept and service details. In addition, there is room for the development of a method or tool for research and/or practice that could assist in such translation. This, in turn, could contribute to the rise of more emotional, cultural and trend sensitive services from service design, ones that are culturally framed and experienced, and thereby alter the dominant notions and expressions of service design discourse as it stands today.

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Publication 2

Dennington, C. (2018). Trendslation. An experiential method for semantic translation in service design. In A. Meroni, A. Medina & B. Villari (Eds.), *ServDes2018:* Service *Design Proof of Concept: Proceedings of the ServDes2018 Conference* (pp. 1049-1063). Milan, Italy: Linköping University Electronic Press. Retrieved from https://ep.liu.se/ecp/150/ecp18150.pdf

Trendslation – an experiential method for semantic translation in Service Design

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Abstract

This paper explores the theme of the service designer as a cultural intermediary and presents a service design method, termed *Trendslation,* that assists in the translation of cultural phenomena into new service offerings and details. Taking a research through design approach, the method uses a *triple-staged semantic transformation* to support service designers in the design of more culturally sensitive services. The method is described and exemplified using the author's explorative design work with major Norwegian service providers within the food and fashion sectors. The method's utility is discussed, and shows that the method has relevance and can be a useful approach for service designers in utilizing cultural material as part of the design process. Further, the paper introduces the idea that cultural trends can be a source material for designing meaningful services. This supports the emerging view that service design can take a stronger cultural role in the future, that of a cultural intermediary.

KEYWORDS: service innovation, cultural intermediary, semantic transformation, Trendslation method

Introduction

As the field of Service Design matures, a perspective of Service Design as a cultural intermediary is currently being explored from within the areas of service innovation and meaningful service experiences (Matthews, 2017; Dennington, 2017). Simon Clatworthy (2011) argues that "Service Design represents the application of design as a creative and culturally informed approach to services" and a research direction has been established exploring how service design could be developed in a more culturally sensitive direction (Dennington, 2017). In turn, this could contribute to the rise of more meaningful, cultural and trend sensitive services coming from service design.

To date there is some discussion in research that casts Service Design as more culturally determined, within such fields as social innovation (Mortati & Villari, 2014), social entrepreneurship (Balis, 2014), and strategic design and innovation (Meroni, 2006; Manzini, 2008). Yet, little originates from a Service Design point of view. From a cultural perspective, however, the discourse regarding the cyclical interplay between design and culture is well developed and discussed (du Gay, 1997; Julier, 2000), as is literature regarding both design and brands as cultural influencers (Cooper & Press, 2003; Holt, 2004). As services become increasingly intertwined with our everyday lives, there is a need to more fully consider cultural approaches in Service Design. As consumer attitudes undergo a shift from owning products towards using services (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2014), the design of meaningful and desirable services could lead to competitive advantage, specifically in culturally determined areas such as fashion, in its relation to consumption, experience and brand value.

With its focus on experience through time and touch-points (Clatworthy, 2013), Service Design offers valuable tools and methods for businesses to design for enhanced customer experience. However, a cultural approach to service design transforms Service Design towards being a culturally sensitive field. This would position the Service Designer as a cultural intermediary, in which cultural meaning is transferred through the design of new services, and where the services themselves may influence culture. This calls for a new approach in Service Design to orient the field within culture, and to explore new methods to assist in the development of new culturally relevant service offerings.

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The work presented in this paper is part of a larger project in which the view of Service Design as a cultural intermediary is being explored, and builds on core areas identified as central (Dennington, 2017). To outline a basis for the description of the suggested method, three main areas are described:

- Triple semantic transformation for service innovation
- Meaning-driven concept innovation
- Cultural phenomena, aesthetics and service style

Service Design as a cultural intermediary

Triple semantic transformation for service innovation

The semantic transformation is described by Karjalainen (2004) as the process of the designer's translation of brand values into the aesthetic characteristics of products. Through this a product not only operates at a functional level, but also acquires intrinsic meaning. Throughout the design of innovative service concepts, a similar transformation process occurs (Dennington, 2017), thus a triple-staged process of meaning creation operates. The initial stage is the translation of an identified cultural phenomenon into meaning, secondly this meaning is translated into the service concept, and finally there is a translation of the meaning-driven concept into details of the service, such as touch-points and experiential evidencing (Figure 01). This could be termed a *triple semantic transformation for service innovation* (Karjalainen, 2004; Clatworthy, 2013; Dennington, 2017). This view creates a foundation for the *Trendslation* method further discussed in this paper. The triple-staged semantic translation is used as a framework for meaning-driven service innovation, one that is in line with current socio-cultural movements and a brand's core values.

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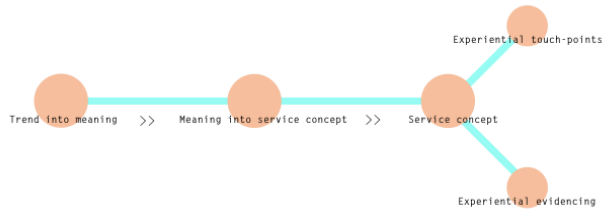
Figure 01 – Early illustration of the triple semantic transformation. Dennington, 2017.

Meaning-driven concept innovation

Designed artifacts convey meaning through the designer's interpretation and translation of cultural influences into objects through design (Cooper & Press, 2003). Julier (2000) discusses how meaning is constructed and represented in an on-going interaction between design and culture, and writes how the iconic example of Alessi's three-legged Juicy Salif citrus squeezer has meaning embedded through its form and aesthetics, and how the experience of using the product surpasses its functionality. In this, the product moves from one of function, into one of contemplation, admiration and desire (Julier, 2000). Thus, meaning can be a driver for innovation through design (Verganti, 2009), and the term "meaning innovation" has been introduced as a design-driven view on innovation that potentially could lead to meaningful experiences through the addition of cultural, symbolic and emotional value (Verganti & Öberg, 2013). The same, it could be argued, happens when designing services, but at present Service Design does not take an active cultural role through its design (Dennington, 2017). Some work has been carried out regarding Service Design and cultural influence and meaning creation, through the bridging of service design and brand experience (da Motta-Filho, 2017), and through the marriage of sacred theory and Service Design (Matthews, 2017), However, there is as yet little research regarding the service designers use of culture and the conveyance of meaning through service offerings.

Meaning-driven concept innovation (Dennington, 2017), has been

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introduced to service design, and describes how a service designer acts as a cultural intermediary by translating cultural phenomena into meaning, and the further translation of this meaning into new service concepts through design. This is seen as an addition to designing new services based on customers' expressed needs or functional improvements. As this is still an emerging research area, there is a need to more systematically explore this translation process. One way forward could be the investigation of how meaning is created through the translation of cultural phenomena into style and aesthetics. In this research I do so by accessing major domains of design, namely fashion, sustainability and trends. These areas are not yet widely taken up in Service Design despite their extensive reach and dynamic character in the culture industries, particularly in relation to branding, and on the part of consumers.

Cultural phenomena, aesthetics and service style

The meaning of style has been elaborately discussed in different design domains: in relation to product style (Vickers, 1992), fashion style (Hebdige, 1979; Crane, 2012) and brand style (Holt, 2004; Tungate, 2005). Aesthetics play an important role in conveying style, and thus in meaning creation (Postrel, 2004). In sub-cultural fashion practices, style is seen to carry significant meaning through semantic and stylistic codes that denote insider knowledge, shared beliefs and values (Hebdige, 1979; Haenfler, 2013). At present, there is little discussion of style in service, and the term could conceivably be used to denote the style of an offering, or the way in which the offering is translated into touch-points over time.

Meaning creation through brand style may be viewed as an outcome of the formally introduced semantic transformation in design (Karjalainen, 2004). Brand style refers to how the aesthetic characteristics of a product bear intrinsic meaning through the physical attributes of the design based on brand values, creating a series of recognizable products carrying the same style, such as successfully seen with e.g. Apple's product range. However, Apple also succeed in expanding their style into their service experience, where style is no longer just connected to physical and visual aesthetic attributes, but also to the marking out of *service specific details*, such as behaviour, tone-of-voice and touch-points (Clatworthy, 2009). Could this point towards the need to define service semantics, and the way in which the intrinsic meaning of services manifests through aesthetic characteristics and service style? And how can

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service designers translate cultural phenomena into certain service styles? This has been explored through translating brands into experience (da Motta-Filho, 2017), although presenting a model for translating brand into service experience, this work does not reference the cultural aspects of an offering. The cultural influence is still missing.

On a consumer goods level, a successful product style is due to the designer's ability to identify and translate cultural *trends* into new products (Muir Wood et al., 2008). Trends are explained as shifting directions that impact and influence areas of society, culture or business (Martin, 2009), or as "a direction of changes in values and needs" (Dragt, 2017). In the consumer market, identifying and translating trends is an important part of designing and delivering desirable products at the right time (Pettinger, 2014). Trends, as shifting entities that may shape and influence design can be viewed as cultural phenomena, in the way they are shaped by, and may shape culture over a longer period of time. Trends can greatly influence the society and culture through which they move. Within service design, there is no discourse regarding the translation of trends into service offerings, yet service designers could be expected to be relevant trend transformers.

Method/methodology

The research presented in this paper sits within a recent and expanding area of culturally sensitive and meaning driven service innovation, including areas of designing for brand experience (da Motta-Filho, 2017), the sacred and rituals in service design (Matthews, 2017) and service design as a cultural intermediary (Dennington, 2017). The themes are part of on-going research at the Norwegian Center for Service Innovation (csi.nhh.no), jointly funded by the Norwegian Research Council and business- and educational partners. The findings presented are extracted from the author's explorative design-driven and practice-based PhD study, where I have participated as a service designer in an overall research by design methodology (Sevaldson, 2010). This research also draws on the author's expertise and experience as a design professional, mainly within the fashion industry, providing input to the development of

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this research through design approach to generate new contextual and conceptual knowledge.

The initial discussion and findings presented in this paper are based upon the author's professional design work with two major Norwegian business partners: a young women's fashion brand with 200 retail stores across Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Austria, and a grocery chain with approx. 1800 grocery stores across Norway. The work also draws upon results from a six-week course for six MA-level students in Service Design engaged in the project with the girls fashion brand, and a one-day workshop with 30 BA-level students in Design, with no partner involved. The student work centered on further exploration of the triple semantic transformation for service innovation. The work was conducted at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, and was jointly supervised by the author.

To analyze the translation processes occurring throughout the trend driven activity of designing new service concepts, mixed methods were used to gather and extract qualitative data from several sources, with the purpose of integrating the findings to synthesise further conclusions (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

Research diaries were used by both the author and the six MA students to "aid reflexivity in the research process" (Nadin & Cassell, 2006), and to capture key insights and moments in reflexive feedback loops of observation, ideation and reflection. The diaries were used for visual and textual explorations through concept ideation, sketching, note taking, illustration and collages. By combining different visual techniques new insights or ideas were triggered and further used to inform design decisions. Throughout the projects, visualizations were used to both communicate and articulate insights (Segelström, 2009).

Participatory observation was conducted by the author through meetings and workshops with the related business partners, and through tutoring students, to gain a clearer understanding of their viewed experience around challenges during the translation process in order to better inform new decisions around further data collection (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015).

Written material, consisting of personal field notes, correspondence with business partners, students' reflective texts, and feedback from external practitioners and business partners gave further insight into the process.

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The service design projects used to discuss the *Trendslation* method are based upon the cultural phenomenon of social awareness centered on sustainability, identified through my previous design work with developing a service for fashion re-use (Dennington, 2017). The students' design work has been used to gather insight into the process, and to help develop the method. Some of the student work is also used as examples in the following section. The design projects were conducted in 2016-2017.

Outlining the Trendslation method

At present, the integration and application of trends as a material for service innovation is not commonly used within Service Design, perhaps because there is a lack of any practical tool or method to assist in this. Yet, the notion of trends as drivers for innovation is regularly both used, and discussed in other design fields (Muir Wood et al., 2008; Pettinger, 2014). In order to further explore the possibility of adapting a trend-driven approach to a service specific view, and integrate it into existing processes as a means to assist in the triple-semantic transformation, I developed what I term the *Trendslation* process (Figure 02).
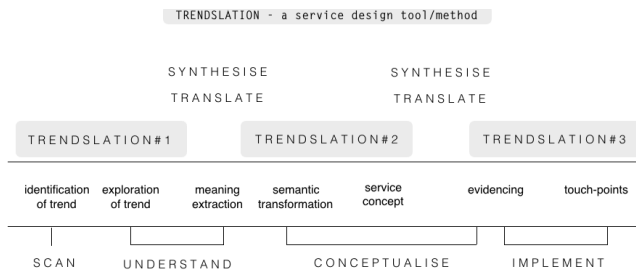
Figure 02 – First conceptual sketch of the Trendslation process. Dennington, 2017.

As a first attempt to construct a structured approach, analyzing the service designers' on-going process loops of identifying, translating and synthesizing trends through interpretation, meaning making, and the transition into service concepts through design and communication, became central. The initial approach and results are presented through reference to three acts of translation in keeping with the triple semantic transformation model; Scan & Understand, Conceptualize and Implement.

1. First translation: Scan & Understand - from trend to meaning

To use trends as a material for innovation, there is a need to both identify trends, and then translate these into meaning, as it is the meaning that lies beyond a trend that can be utilized as a driver for innovation (Verganti, 2009; Matthews, 2017), not the actual trend itself. To first identify trends, the active scanning and synthesizing of trends is a common approach to the early stages of the innovation process in areas of design, such as product and fashion design (Mason et al., 2015). This can be done in several ways, such as using existing trend resources, which can range from paying for costly trend reports, to using free online resources, going on inspirational travels before major projects or new seasons, and in general being open to "newness".

As creative practitioners, service designers are open and sensitive to cultural expressions and impressions, just as designers in other fields are. However, the use of structured forecasting or trend resources is not common in Service Design, nor is it an accepted part of today's process. In developing an approach for a Service Design context, I have tested existing approaches to scanning and synthesizing from other fields (Martin, 2009). These have been adapted and applied in a service context as a first approach to developing a starting point. These steps are described in more detail below:

1.1 Identify

Forecasting is a way of predicting future patterns and trends, through the way it "looks at how hidden currents in the present signal possible changes in direction" (Saffo, 2007). Different forecasting methods are used in major areas such as politics, economics and in relation to identifying societal changes (Newbold & Bos, 1990; Armstrong, 1985). Keeping within the realms of culture, the

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technique of Cultural Brailing, as termed by acknowledged forecaster Faith Popcorn (Martin, 2009), refers to being hypersensitive and observant of *newness*, such as new products, new genres, new styles, in addition to being open in every day life, to societal, political, technological, environmental and cultural shifts.

Els Dragt (2017) suggests scanning as the first phase of trend research to detect signs of change, which I adopted to begin the identification process in my own study. Through scanning and exploring socio-cultural expressions such as music, literature, commerce, art, social media, magazines and newspapers, food and drink, and available online trend resources (Figure 03), trends were actively "hunted". Alongside scanning, physical items were gathered, creating a collection of photographs, pieces of graphic work (flyers, labels, packaging etc.), print- and cut-out's and products.

In parallel with the use of scanning, the "5-Whys" technique, as suggested in *The Trend Forecaster's Handbook* (2009), was tested as a way to dig deeper into observations made. Through sorting, ordering and clustering the visual findings, patterns emerged, and consideration of which trends were relevant in relation to the brand values led to new findings. As trend forecasting for consumer products seems to focus on the semantic characteristics and physical attributes when identifying newness, perhaps service designers additionally need to be more aware of intangible newness, such as new rhetoric, new business models or new experiences?

Figure 03 – Visual scanning and exploration of socio-cultural expressions. Dennington, 2017.

1.2. Explore & expand

The identified trend of social awareness was further expanded by the author as a design professional, through visual interpretations of the trend in relation to the partnering brand. This was done through the format of a mood board, by conveying the aesthetic and stylistic experience, as an orientation step for further use by other designers. The mood board, as a service design tool, is "a visual composition of pictures and materials that propose an atmosphere by giving the generic perception of it. The mood board helps in the elicitation of some values the service has that are difficult to be described by words." (servicedesigntools.org, 2017). By grouping similar or contrasting visual expressions, clustering by certain characteristics - colour, theme, form, style or shape - patterns emerged through forced or free association, which triggered new associative streams, and the designer could start to build a personal interpretation of the trend in relation to the brand. In this way the mood board proposed an atmosphere, but also extended into a more expressive, experientially oriented and brand relevant "experience board". By translating the semantic qualities of the trend and brand, the visual interpretation triggered a more immediate and emotional response in the designer – and acted as the first move towards developing a certain service style (Figure 04).

Figure 04 – Exploring a stylistic and experiential expansion of the mood board to convey service style. Dennington, 2017.

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1.3. Synthesize - Meaning making

The translation from trend to meaning was especially challenging owing to the nature of this process being highly intuitive through the designers' iterative loops of synthesizing and meaning creation. This became apparent through my own work, and was also the step most frequently identified as the most challenging by the students. Zooming in to parts of the visual interpretation, and combining these images with sketches, notes and key words, as well as discussing and describing the meaning in personal terminology, through word clouds, short descriptive texts or labeling with titles, were all useful ways of generating keywords describing the intended meaning. One example of meaning making was discovered through the framing of social awareness, where the trend of a new wave of feminism was identified in relation to the partnering young girls fashion brands values (Love, Listen, Inspire and Surprise), and led to the new meaning of "female empowerment through friendship and education." Reflecting on what the trend actually means, to whom and how, why the trend is happening, and if/how/why the trend is relevant to the brand, assisted in the meaning extraction. A more structured approach to this process could be a valuable step forward in meaning creation.

2. Second translation: Conceptualize - from meaning to concept

Throughout the first translation, a cognitive ideation process was initiated. With the defined meaning as a framing, more thorough ideation through sketching was used to start developing service concepts. However, the use of hand sketching only, in many cases - resulted in the concepts getting stuck at idea level, with the difficulty of moving away from the brands' existing core offering or domain, and into more innovative service concepts. Two steps were explored to assist in the move forward from ideation to conceptualization: communicative concept sketches and concept communication.

2.1. Communicative concept sketches

To begin with, the use of multiple design techniques such as collages, mapping, illustrations, short storyboards and simplified customer journeys, in quick sessions, helped to develop the concepts. Next, by adding a concept title, a short descriptive text in the brand's tone-of-

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voice, and by selecting grouping of images that conveyed the intended experience and communicated key offering, led to the formation of "concept-sketches" (Figure 05) that had such precise communicative features that these could serve as starting points for discussion to extend the concept even further. Developing mock-ups and simple prototypes of certain touch-points made the concepts more tangible, making discussion easier, with the result that feedback led to concepts being pushed in more innovative directions.
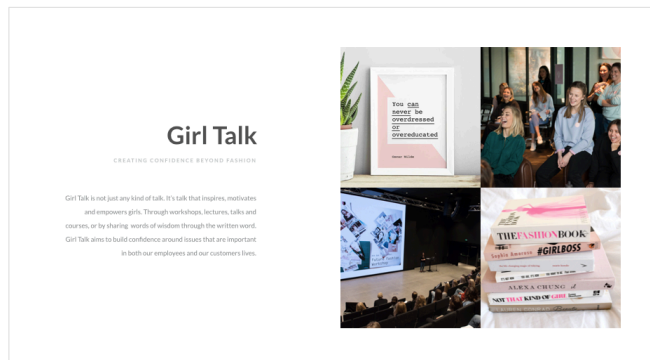
Figure 05 – Concept sketch with title, tone-of-voice and curated images for precise concept communication. Dennington, 2017

2.2. Concept communication

As the concepts became more developed, communicating the core offering and experience in a precise, clear and engaging way made the concepts accessible for outside actors. When presenting the final concepts to the business partners, they were able to quickly understand the concept and how it related to their brand. Conveying the key features of the concept in a style that was attuned to their brand image, through choice of images, concept name and tone-of-voice, triggered immediate emotional response. This also functioned as a starting point for conversations and discussion around concepts that were far from partners' core offerings, yet still in line with their brand.

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In one case the precise level of concept communication led to one of the partnering brand's VP of Marketing, Purchase & Assortment commenting that several of the students' concepts could almost directly be implemented into their current strategy, while selected service concepts designed by the author are in the process of being further developed by the partnering brand. One example was the student-designed concept of a summer camp (Figure 06), with education and friendship in focus, which successfully conveyed both the trend and brand values. Although the concept moved far beyond the young womens' fashion brand's core offering of selling clothing, it was still perceived by the partnering brand to be highly relevant as a new culturally located service offering.

Figure 06 – Concept communication for summer camp concept through mock-up flyer, mood board and simplified journey. Miryam Pippich, MA-student, 2017.

3. Third translation: Implement - from concept to experiential details

Experiential touch-points to enhance the meaning were designed and prototyped to strengthen the concept. One example was the prototype of a poster for a workshop at the summer camp, designed by a student. In addition to the graphic elements and tone-of-voice being in line with the trend and brand, the content of the workshop also enhanced the meaning. This was achieved through the theme of the workshop, carefully curated workshop facilitators, the venue of the workshop and down to details, such as what kind of lunch the participants would be served (Figure 07). All these parts added up to create the meaningful experience intended. Due to lack of time, the potential of designing experiential touch-points, or other experiential details was not fully looked into. For further inquiry, this step could be introduced earlier in the innovation process, and also be further

explored in relation to how the design of such experiential details can shape and model the service experience.
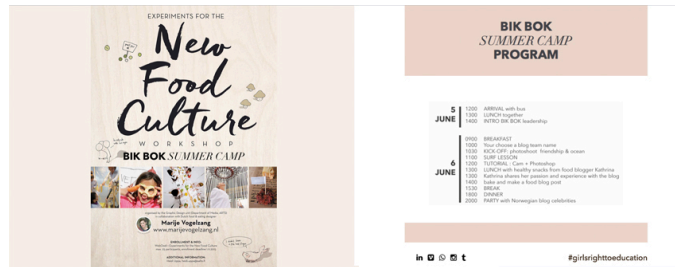
Figure 07 – Experiential evidencing of program for summer camp concept. Miryam Pippich, MA-student, 2017.

To Trendslate or not to Trendslate

Through these first attempts at operationalizing the *Trendslation* method, three overarching findings arose. They support the claim for a richer, more elaborated cultural perspective on framing, enacting and analyzing trends and Service Design, and are discussed below.

An overall finding is that the method of *Trendslation* shows promise for assisting service designers in the semantic translation process from trend to meaning, and from meaning to service concept and details, in the early innovation phase. However, the method may show most potential for the design of highly experiential and meaningful consumer specific services (e.g. within retail and travel), where the user is more prone to act affectively. In other less culturally located areas of Service Design, e.g. within public healthcare, the method may seem to be redundant or to offer little assistance. For some services, it may be that only certain parts of the service are affected by cultural influence, and could benefit from using the method. Still, the use of the method for designing service concepts in a highly visual, stylistic and communicative way as triggers for conversations or to enact change within an organization could be more widely used within several areas of Service Design.

A second finding is that service design may benefit from a cultural orientation, in the way this opens for the design of more meaningful

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service concepts in line with current cultural conversations, through the service designer's ability to translate cultural trends into meaning and further into service concepts and experiential details. This supports my initial notion of the service designer acting as a cultural intermediary, through designing new services influenced by culture, but also having influence upon culture.

The final finding is that cultural phenomena can be used to shape and model service concepts in the innovation phase, and to design experiential service details, through the extraction and translation of meaning. These three findings, it could be argued, might allow service designers to design more culturally informed and culturally inflected services.

Discussion: Service Design and the service designer as cultural intermediaries

In the light of Service Design as a culturally sensitive domain, there lies potential in regarding cultural, and thereby meaningful material as an influential factor in shaping and modeling service concepts in the innovation phase, through a semantic transformation process. The following reflections upon the approach and its implications are discussed below.

In the process of the triple semantic transformation, it became evident that the service designer, when designing new services based on meaning, translated from trends – also acts as a cultural intermediary; as an individual transferring meaning (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006), and by this, acting as a taste maker (Maguire & Matthews, 2014). The view of the service designer as a cultural intermediary could initiate further reflection around what this might mean for practitioners, and the influence they may have upon contemporary culture, through the services they design.

In this view of the service designer as a cultural intermediary, and a designer of meaning-driven concepts, there is a need for a more experiential and expressive method for conveying the semantic qualities of the trend in relation to the brand through the designer's own interpretation, so as to assist in the identification and meaning creation. This is due to a key ability of the designer in gaining a clear cognitive interpretation of the cultural phenomenon, in relation to

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the brand values, as this understanding forms the basis for meaning creation.

In acting as a cultural intermediary, the service designer's ability to synthesize and create meaning from identified trends in relation to brand values is due to the service designer gaining a clear understanding of this trend through their own interpretation. Existing service design tools, such as the mood board, may be expanded in a more stylistic and experiential direction to assist in this step.

Aesthetics and style also play an important role in meaning creation (Postrel, 2003), and through the *Trendslation* process highly visual, experiential and stylistic interpretations resulted in stronger, more innovative and more elaborate service concepts, that both communicate the extracted meaning, and the partnering brands values. Expanding the format of a visual tool, such as the mood board, into a more stylistic and experiential visual representation, could build on what Ted Matthews (2016) introduces as Graphic experiential evidencing, as a method for "expressive communication of meaningful service encounters." If developed further, a more stylistic approach to experiential evidencing, communicating meaningful service concepts in relation to trends and brand values, could contribute to the service designers' toolbox in the innovation phase of designing meaningful service concepts.

In the view of Service Design as a cultural intermediary, there is interesting potential that lies in viewing cultural trends as a service design material, throughout the innovation phase. When designing products, materials can be modeled to convey different semantic characteristics in the object, and thus convey different meanings. In Service Design, however, "the object to be modeled is the whole system and its individual parts"(Clatworthy, 2011). In the concept development phase, it became a challenge to distinguish the translation of trends into the whole system (e.g. customer journey), or into its individual parts (e.g. touch-points), which suggests the need for a more systematic tool for service designers to use in the application of trend as a material, primarily to shape service concepts, but also to assist in translation into the service details.

Current approaches for translation into products does not take into account this need for translation into both the whole and into certain parts, and calls for a *service specific* tool. This could be achieved by exploring how the service concept can be modeled according to

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where, when and how the semantic translation occurs throughout the service experience.

An additional reflection is that in viewing Service Design and the service designer as cultural intermediaries there is a need to explore, identify and define the semantics of services. Due to the intangible nature of services, service semantics may be related to codes and symbols, signals and attitudes, interactions or transactions, amongst many other possibilities. How can we identify service semantics? And through this, how can we define the aesthetic qualities of services? Expanding this knowledge base could help in the development of the area of Service Design as a cultural intermediary.

Some conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to initiate the development of a systemized method for the semantic translation of cultural trends into service concepts, and into experiential service details. This is currently missing as a part of service design practice, yet is widely used in the innovation phase of other design fields. An explorative design approach was adopted to investigate how such translation of trends may be adopted to Service Design through the development of a process termed *Trendslation*. The *Trendslation* process was devised through service design projects with established Norwegian service providers within fashion and food sectors. The findings show that *Trendslation* has promise and could be a useful contribution to service design methods. Furthermore, it helps Service Design enact its semantic turn towards the service designer also acting as a cultural intermediary.

For service design practitioners, investing time in an early project phase to hunt, explore and expand trends could be a way forward to initiate the uptake of cultural influence. Here trend forecasting may be taken up as a resource. For service design practitioners in companies with internal trend forecasting units, some steps of the *Trendslation* may be redundant; nevertheless, the process could help the service designer in the translation of the identified trends into meaning, and further into service concepts and details. In Service Design education, simple trend forecasting techniques could be introduced to encourage and stimulate the cultural approach to service design.

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Further research is needed to develop a more systematic method or tool for the translation and application of trends into service details, such as experiential touch-points and experiential details. This could include the investigation of how different trends may shape service concepts, according to where, when and how trends are applied along a customer journey. The components and structure of the suggested stylistic experiential evidencing tool needs further research with the aim of developing it as a contribution to the service designers' toolbox.

In my on-going research, I will work with new international business partners to further develop and test the method. A number of particular directions, arising out of the research reported here, will be explored. Possible new research areas could explore the translation of trends into service details, how the service concept changes in relation to how, where and which trends are applied, in what way stylistic experiential evidencing could be developed as a tool for practitioners and how service style can be conveyed and communicated in an early innovation phase.

The *Trendslation* method provides an initial framework through which service designers can consider the influence of cultural trends as drivers for innovation, in coherence with brand values. However, the view of Service Design and the service designer as cultural intermediaries implies the need to further discuss the possibilities, implications and new roles of Service Design in a fuller cultural view and framing. In what ways might new methods, such as the suggested *Trendslation* model, provide new cultural roles to the service designer in shaping and impacting culture through the translation process and meaning making, and through this the design of new services? The *Trendslation* method offers one early, flexible and dynamic model of the uptake of cultural practices, expertise and insights into the on-going semantic translation of service design into meaningful experiences.

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Publication 3

Dennington, C. (2018) Better fashion futures? From product focus to service experiencing. *Online proceedings of the What's Going on? Global Fashion Conference, October, 2018, London, UK.* Retrieved from http://gfc-conference.eu/proceedings/

GLOBAL FASHION 2018

Better Fashion Futures. From Product Consumption to Service Experiencing

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Abstract

This paper offers a view on how Service Design may help fashion brands take a greater role in the circular economy by shifting organizational mindset from a product focus, to one where the product becomes part of a highly experiential service. This is done by using the lens of Service Design as a means of designing for highly experiential, more meaningful and desirable services. The paper describes the newly developed Service Design method Trendslation, which aims to design innovative service concepts based upon cultural trends and brand values. Further, it provides an example of the Trendslation method, and its use, in an explorative research by design project with a Global sports and lifestyle brand. The findings indicate that Service Design can be a useful approach for fashion brands as a means to develop more sustainable fashion practices. However, Service Design needs to be further developed in a more experiential direction to be able to fully realize the potential presented here. A focus upon the *experiential customer journe*y, and *experiential elements* are suggested as additions to existing Service Design tools as a means to do this. Finally, this paper suggests that Service Design and Fashion could develop valuable symbioses, to explore the move from product to service as the fashion industry continues towards becoming more sustainable in practice.

Keywords: Service Design, Trendslation, sustainable fashion, experience, experiential service journey, experiential elements

Introduction

The fashion industry is in the midst of a transformative era. Moving towards more sustainable and socially conscious practices, commercial fashion brands and companies are looking for new approaches for developing sustainable solutions for better fashion consumption (Ræbild and Bang, 2018). A growing awareness is arising around the environmental impact and social injustice the commercial fashion industry inflicts on people and planet (Fletcher, 2008; Aakko, 2013), yet consumers still seek the pleasure and emotional satisfaction, as well as the novel experience, status and identity creation they can attain through the purchase of fashion products (Fletcher, 2008). This transformation towards sustainable and socially conscious practices moves the focus from the point of sale, towards a circular economy, that requires a greater degree of customer participation, motivation and action over time. The fashion industry therefore needs to move its focus from one specific point in time, to a lifecycle approach, which necessarily requires creating relationships over time with customers. However, this transformation needs to happen without loss of the customer experience that fashion has, through its highly aesthetic, desirable and seductive nature.

In parallel, a societal shift of mindset is growing - from buying and owning products, to using services (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2014). Established fashion brands and companies are slowly realizing the value of looking into models for extending product lifetime in line with the circular economy (Niinimäki, 2017), and following in the footsteps of independent brands, startups and NGO's through offering services built around their products, such as repair, recycling and redesign (Armstrong et.al, 2015). To motivate consumers to adopt these new practices, there is a strong need for these services to be highly experiential in nature and to be perceived as meaningful and desirable. They also need to be strongly aligned to brand DNA and attuned to cultural trends (Dennington, 2018).

The combination of a sustainable transformation of the industry and the societal move from owning products to using services, alongside the consequences mentioned earlier, I argue creates a trajectory in fashion that moves it from products to services. If fashion is viewed in a service perspective, there is a need to design and develop the relationship between fashion brand and customer over time - beyond the purchase point, and consider the whole fashion experience. Service Design is a field of design that designs offerings to provide experience over time, and across different touch-points (Clatworthy, 2013). Service Design therefore seems like a relevant field to work together with Fashion to develop the services that will be necessary during this transformative era. By bridging the fashion industry with Service Design, potential synergies may be revealed, in the move towards more sustainable and socially conscious fashion practices. If fashion is to move past its focus upon the point of sale, and look at a circular economy, there is a need to find means of understanding the customer perspective in this.

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Shifting to a service mindset requires customer effort and motivation also outside of the purchase moment. Service design offers a means to understand and encourage this through its focus upon the customers' experiential journey, where the point of purchase is one part of a total journey, seen from the customer view. The service designer seeks to design for specific experiences along a journey, in which the customer is an active co-creator and co-producer.

Through this paper I suggest the newly developed Service Design method *Trendslation* as an option for fashion companies to look beyond the point of purchase, and towards the design of services across a whole journey. This approach could open up for innovative service solutions that provide emotional value through use of a service, in contrast to the purchase of a product. This in turn could influence a more sustainable approach to fashion consumption. Service Design as a design field and discipline, looks beyond the product and point-of-purchase, and into the design for holistic experiences over time, across different touch-points (Clatworthy, 2013). The Trendslation method could assist in the transformation from fashion product to service experiences, by focusing on meaning-driven service innovation (Dennington, 2018) through the uptake of cultural influences, and the translation of these into highly experiential and more meaningful service experiences. Through this paper I suggest that this could specifically be valuable for the fashion domain, with its major cultural position and focus, and trend-based nature. This paper offers one view forward in the quest for more sustainable fashion practices.

A Service Design approach for better fashion practices?

Service Design, as a field and approach, has grown out of an interdisciplinary background, including product and interaction design (Clatworthy, 2013). Service design is described as "designed offerings to provide experiences that happen over time and across different touch-points" (Clatworthy, 2013, pp.19). With its focus on designing for the intangible and complex nature of services, service design has described and developed tools, methods and approaches for deconstructing such complexity into parts – including timeline, touch-points, service moments and actors (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2012). The notion of a timeline is translated into the service design tool of a Customer Journey, which is a mapping of touch-points through time. The customer journey "provides a vivid, but structured visualization of a service user's experience" (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2012), whilst touch-points are described as "the points of interaction between customer and organization" (Clatworthy, 2013, pp.88). Touch-points can range from physical to digital, intangible to tangible, and have been defined as a service design material, argued as "one of the most important materials used in Service Design to understand, explore and develop innovative service solutions" (Clatworthy, 2011). In today's fashion context the main touch-points that customers meet are often directly related to the point

of purchase, such as the physical or digital store, the products and labels, carrier bags, or to the pre-purchase phase through magazines, advertisements, social media posts etc. Designing and structuring touch-points throughout the post-purchase phase could potentially open up for innovative service solutions across the whole journey. Another relevant viewpoint is how services exist within a network of actors, where in this context – the customer is viewed as a major actor that together co-produce the service, and through this, become co-creators of value.

The objectives of using Service Design approaches are to support innovation in service organizations (Clatworthy, 2009), and to design, develop and deliver services that are useful, usable, efficient, effective and desirable (British design council). Up until now, a major part of service design practice and research has focused on the "useful, usable, efficient and effective" part – through service design for more traditional service providers such as within telecom, banking, insurance, healthcare (Freire and Sangiorgi, 2010; Halvorsrud et al., 2016). However, the newly identified direction in Service Design of Service Design as a cultural intermediary (Matthews, 2017; Dennington, 2018), casts the domain as a culturally sensitive field where *meaning-construction* is explored as an innovation material with the aim to address and enhance the desirability and experience focus, and to design new services and service offerings that trigger an immediate and intuitive emotional response, through being highly experiential. This seems to resonate strongly with some core characteristics of fashion, with its focus on style and the "It"-factor (Beard, 2012), and the need to deliver desirable and meaningful service experiences. In turn, the design of "desirable services" could lead to competitive advantage in a growing service dominant market, specifically within such culturally conditioned business sectors as fashion.

Desirable and meaningful service experiences

To address and further explore the area of meaning-construction through service design, the Trendslation method has been developed with the aim to utilize cultural influence as an innovation material (Dennington, 2017), based on the notion of a semantic transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004). The method is built within the framework of design as a cultural intermediary in which designed artifacts can convey intrinsic meaning through its physical design attributes (Cooper and Press, 2003), brands as bearers of meaning through their cultural relevance (Holt, 2004), and the cyclic interplay between design and culture (du Gay, 1998; Julier, 2007). The Trendslation method explores how style, aesthetics and trends can be factors for conveying intrinsic meaning of designed services. By looking to cultural trends and identifying the underlying meaning of these cultural movements in alignment with brand DNA, the semantic translation can transform this, through design, into new service offerings and details. In the same way design competence is used to design desirable products that entice

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customers to purchase certain products, how can service design competence be used to entice customers to use certain services?

Moving beyond the point of product purchase through journey

Due to Fashion's strong cultural position, the new services that will be offered in a transformational process from product to service will have to be highly experiential, and perceived as desirable. In the book "This is Service Design thinking" *desirability* in Service Design is presented as consisting of usability, pleasurability and utility, and further how desirability "requires a strong internal alignment, a strong brand and a good knowledge of managing design" (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2011). Brands with high cultural and lifestyle capital, and a strong brand perception both internally and externally may be most successful in developing new services that can entice customers to more sustainable practices. In regards to new services related to repair and reuse Cosette Armstrong (2013) argues how these might be "most suitable for companies with strong brand images", which enhances this view, also from a sustainable fashion perspective. Many brands within the commercial fashion industry are already highly linked to service and experience, especially at the point of purchase, such as the in-store or online experience, staff training and through branded and experiential touch-points. However, introducing Service Design tools, such as an experience-based customer journey, could help in service innovation throughout the whole experience, extending into the post purchase phase. How can Service Design help cultural brands nudge customers into more sustainable fashion practices, through designing for memorable, desirable and meaningful service experiences?

Service Design for sustainable fashion solutions

From a sustainable fashion point of view, the design of new services is suggested as a way forward for more sustainable fashion practices and buying. Kirsi Niinimäki (2013) writes how for example "services that aim to extend how long garments are used offer value in the sustainable context" (pp. 22). She adds, "one challenge in the current system is how to design products added with services that encourage consumers to adopt more environmentally responsible behavior". This is perhaps where Service Design could assist in designing services that trigger emotional response, that engage and entice customers to use these services, through the *experience* they provide. Armstrong (2013) suggests how the *social experience* surrounding the object could be a means to move from consumption, while Niinimäki (2013) writes how the *emotional experience* of consumption and purchasing needs to be offered through new sustainable systems, including services. With a Service Design approach, the focus upon designing for such experiences could help consumer become more socially responsible, through the experiential value they offer.

Methods

To further explore the Trendslation method and the service designer's translation process, a design intervention was carried out using a Research by Design approach (Sevaldson, 2010). Between January and May 2018, I engaged in a collaborative service design project with the Research & Development department of a Global sport and lifestyle brand with major cultural influence. Throughout the project phase I spent some periods of time physically embedded in the design department, and participated actively as a service design professional by enacting several design interventions. These design interventions were executed on an independent level; however, the team supported me with insights, relevant material and continuous feedback. Through an explorative and open-ended approach several service concepts were designed throughout the project, and acted as investigative "objects" (Seago and Dunne, 1999) that were used to analyze the steps of semantic transformation. The actual act of designing became part of the reflexive process (Schön, 1992). The brands customer insight unit identified the trends used.

Mixed methods where further used to extract and synthesize findings (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007), including the use of research diaries (Nadin and Cassell, 2006), participatory observation and semi-structured conversations (Taylor et al., 2015) and field notes and sketches (Segelström, 2009). The findings are also built upon insights that surfaced through the work of 11 MA students in a 7 – week Service Design course in the Trendslation method, at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, which I co-tutored and co-supervised.

The Trendslation method

The Trendslation method has been developed to assist services designers in the semantic translation process of identifying, translating and transforming cultural trends into new service offerings and details. The Trendslation method can be used in the early innovation phase to design for highly experiential and more meaningful service experiences (Dennington, 2018). Through the Trendslation process the underlying meaning behind cultural trends are utilized as a material for innovation through three acts of semantic translation, illustrated in Figure 1. (Dennington, 2018).

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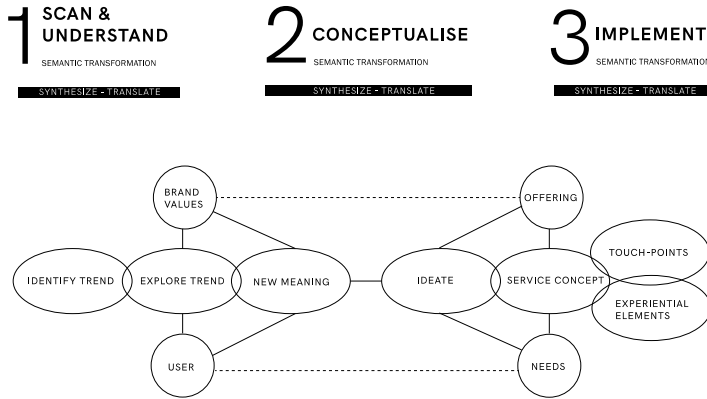
Figure 1. Conceptual model of the Trendslation method showing the three steps of semantic translation. By Claire Dennington, 2018.

Together with the partnering brand, I carried out a design intervention to test and further develop the Trendslation method. Through utilizing the underlying meaning of identified cultural trends in line with the brand DNA, this was further translated into new service concepts. One of the outcomes of this work was the service concept Remix (Figure 2). For this paper I will focus on the second and third step of translation, highlighted through Remix as a case example.
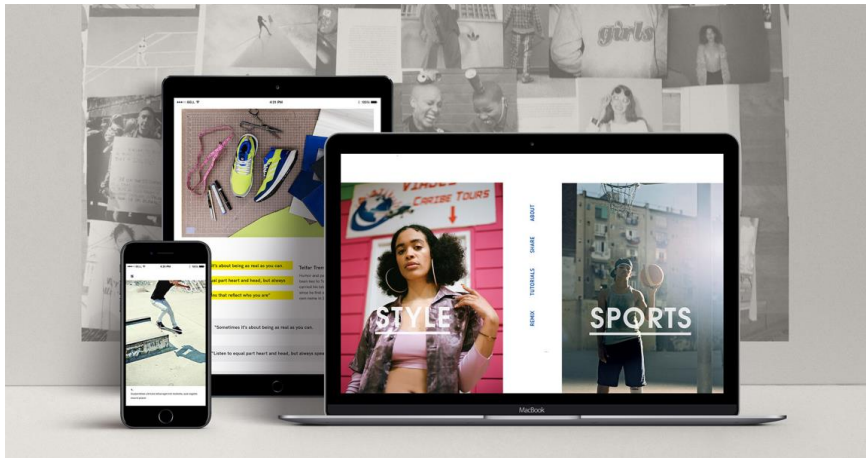
Figure 2. Service Design concept Remix, early sketch of cross-platform experience. By Claire Dennington, 2018.

The service design concept Remix – a case example

Remix is a service that offers a creative space for the identified user of "creative consumer" to explore, hack and create content related to style and identity, urban sports and street culture. Remix offers on- and offline platforms for building communities of creative individuals that re-make and re-sell pre-owned branded products that inspire more sustainable consumption patterns, and build awareness around societal or political issues. In addition, users can upload and share editorial and educational content, such as style guides or tutorials. Remix offers new way for users to engage with the brand through a more meaningful brand experience, by creating emotional and social value through this community. The concept is based on the translation of trends regarding DIY- and maker culture, gender and identity fluidity, deconstruction of brands and the slash/slash generation, to mention some. The trends, and the underlying meaning behind, were explored and visually interpreted (Figure 3), and further synthesized into a value proposition based on experience. This served as a baseline throughout the next translation stages, to keep the concept in line with both the brand DNA and the identified meaning.

Figure 3. Experiential mood board used to explore trends and meaning. By Claire Dennington, 2018.

The service journey and key service moments

Remix was further developed and designed through developing a visual and experience-based journey (Figure 4). Some key service moments, touch-points and actors are described here: Through an internal contest with re-making and up-cycling of pre-used products in focus, the creative individuals are carefully curated amongst the brands employees, as many of these are conceived as ambassadors and influencers of lifestyle culture, connected to the creative scenes, such as within music, art, design and street style. The results are showcased in an exhibition, to create social media buzz and gain media attention. External actor collaborations are a part of the concept, such as with influential artists or musicians that could donate key brand products to create awareness around re-use. This could contribute to raising funds through an auction of these products in support of other partnering actors, such as non-profit organization working with causes in line with the brands core values.
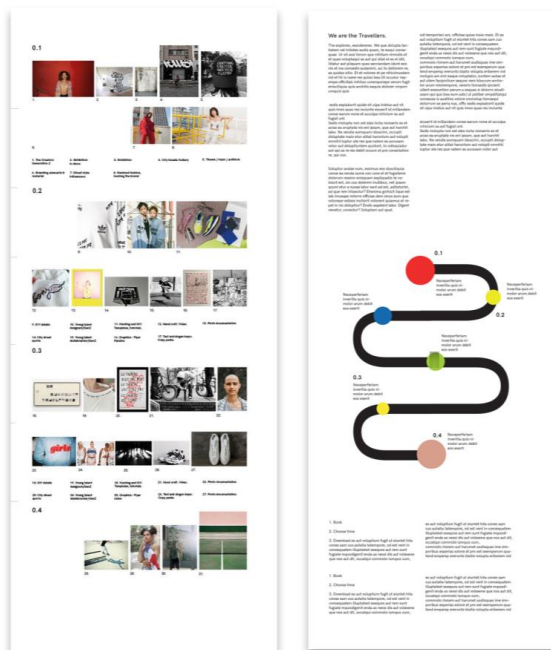
Figure 4. Example of an Experiential Service Journey to convey the curated service experience. By Claire Dennington 2018.

At the point of purchase, the shop staff encourages customers to bring back their products if they no longer use them, and the carrier bag functions as pre-paid postal packaging for returning used items. Products that are in good condition are re-sold through the Remix platform. In this way the brand can curate and sell their own pre-owned products, and to some extent reclaim brand ownership that may get lost on independent and more general re-selling sites. To launch Remix to customers, in-store experiences with popup workshops offer customization and "remixing" of your product by artists, designers and illustrators is offered. Addressing issues of gender and identity, Remix offers rental of lifestyle related sporting goods, such as skateboards and BMX bikes, together with courses hosted by key names within the scene, and a focus on recruiting participants across gender. Through this, customers are given an opportunity to "remix" their identity through trying different urban sports.

From touch-points to experiential elements

To engage customers throughout the service journey every touch-point and detail needs to have a high level of style, including service specific details such as ones related to tone-of-voice, sensory details, gestures and rituals. In developing the experience, it was not sufficient to add a generic entity, such as "magazine" or "music", but rather define what kind of magazine, through details as theme, copy and images, or what kind of music - down to the detail of which artist and which song. In exploring socio-political trends in relation to sport and lifestyle, one example of an experiential element was a fanzine (Figure 5) with a "guide to organize a demonstration", another was a curated playlist of early 90's political hip hop to download together with renting a skateboard. This showed how going into the details and altering these had direct impact on the experience. In this example, the core offering persisted, however the experience changed in direction of the translated trend.

Through the work with developing the service concept, two findings became prominent. One is the need to develop the customer journey into an experiential journey to fully convey and communicate the intended experience through time; the other is how experiential details can reinforce, influence and alter the experience.

Figure 5. Experiential elements: The fanzine includes tone-of-voice, images, font. Graphic design by Daniel B. Nerheim, 2018

Moving from Customer Journey to Experiential Service Journey

Customer journeys are central parts of Service Design, and "provides a high-level overview of the factors influencing user experience" (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2012), yet when designing for a highly experiential service experience, the traditional Customer Journey became insufficient in communicating the experiential touch-points and other elements, and their stylistic characteristics. In fashion, the experience is more determined on style, aesthetics and desirability. The *experiential service journey* was developed to convey and communicate a curated experience throughout the journey, by adding signifiers of cultural codes (Santamaria et al., 2018) to visualize touch-points and other experience based elements. Through shifting these elements along the journey, the experience changed accordingly. The stylistic service journey contributes to a more immediate, intuitive and emotional response to the intended service experience, through aligning touch-points and elements to both trend and brand DNA, resulting in a more holistic, stylistic and experiential service concept. The stylistic service journey can also act as a co-creative and strategic innovation tool for businesses.

Experiential elements

To reinforce the stylistic journey and through this, the experience, service specific *experiential elements* were identified as an addition to touch-points, as well as adding stylistic features to existing or new touch-points. Experiential elements can be used to reinforce the intended experience/meaning, and help in the development of a specific *service style*. Experimental

elements could include sensory, symbolic, gestural, physical, digital, material, aesthetic and spatial details, such as tone-of-voice, interior, graphic elements, taste, sound, lighting, fonts, colours, illustration, photo, branding, form or geographic location, to mention some. By understanding and detailing these elements, the experience can be shifted, altered, or even *curated.*

From co-creator to co-curator

An additional reflection that surfaced through the design work was how the curator role became apparent throughout the Remix concept, both in the design of the concept – but also through the concept itself. The Service Designer acts as a curator, in carefully curating the service style through the stylistic journey and experiential elements. In the concept, the brand acts as a curator of competence, and the user acts as a curator of content. In the view of curators as "knowledge brokers of a specific nature, taking culture created by others, and interpreting and publicizing it for the public good" (Villi et al. 2012), I find it interesting to reflect upon these different curatorial roles, and how they may affect the outcomes of a new service that relies on customer involvement and engagement. As co-creation and co-production is an essential part of Service Design, what happens when the customer also becomes a *co-curator*, a broker of cultural knowledge that will have a direct impact on the service experience?

Allthough the testing of Trendslation has been limited, it has shown to be a promising tool for Service Design, and a good fit for the design of highly experiential services. It has also unearthed many interesting aspects, some which are discussed in the following section.

Service Design and better fashion practices

As the fashion industry calls for more sustainable solutions, it will necessarily move from products towards services. Service design is here presented as an option for looking beyond the product, and point of purchase – and into the whole journey of the customer - brand relationship, to identify potential areas for service innovation. As the field of Service Design is developing in a more culturally determined direction, the aim of delivering highly experiential and desirable services seems a relevant fit for fashion businesses, and an opportunity worth investigating further. Tools and methods from Service Design, such as the customer journey can be beneficial in moving focus from product to service, although they need to be adapted to fit the specific rich experiential context of fashion. Designing services through developing customer journeys, and mapping of touch-points is argued to be valuable in improving the customer experience (Clatworthy, 2013), specifically towards the pre-and post-purchase experience (Zomerdjik and Voss, 2010). Yet, these tools need to be evolved to better fit the

highly stylistic and experiential characteristics of more desirable and meaningful service concepts. The *Experiential Service Journey*, and *Experiential Elements* are suggested to address this issue; however there is still a need to further explore the potential dynamics between Service Design and product focused companies.

Another issue that arose in the early stages of the transformation process through the design intervention was the need to develop a new value proposition based on experience. This could assist in the move from product focus to service mindset, through the further translation of this new value proposition into the service concepts, and details, as a step in the Trendslation process. This resonates with Armstrong's suggestion of "creating compelling value propositions that entice consumers into a new, more sustainable lifestyle" (Armstrong, 2013 pp. 108) to influence better fashion production and consumption. In becoming more experience centric, focusing on a new value proposition based on experience could help re-frame the brand's new or existing offering, and assist in the development of highly experiential services. This should be further defined and exemplified.

Through continuous meetings with, and presentations for representatives from the partnering brand throughout the project presented in this paper, it also became apparent how brands that hold a strong position in the culture industries, like within lifestyle and fashion, could introduce new conceptual services with a strong experiential focus with different intentions. One could be as external initiatives, helping build customer relationships, brand value and better practices, as described in this paper. On the other hand, the design of new concept services could act as internal conversation pieces, or change agents, to help shift mindset within the company. Concept services can convey innovative concepts in an emotional, visual, stylistic way that both represent the brand and the identified trend. In the same way, for example, concept cars are designed in the automotive industry for attention creation (Backman and Börjesson, 2006), to strengthen brand image and act as a catalyst for change within organizations (Clatworthy, 2009), concept services could also be designed as brand strengthening, and trend-driven experiential initiatives to envision new service concepts, to enact change within an organization. This could be further explored by looking into more speculative and futures-oriented approaches perhaps by including anti-trends into the Trendslation method.

One final reflection is linked to Kate Fletcher's argument of how "fashion and clothing are different concepts and entities", and further how she defines "clothing as material production, and fashion as symbolic production." (p.119). Fashion, with its highly cultural, experiential and mediated practices (Skjulstad and Morrison, 2016), could investigate this symbolic production through Service Design. With its focus on experience, meaning-making and cultural influence, Service Design could be a relevant approach for the fashion industry in designing for more

sustainable service offerings, ones that exist past the point of purchase. Through the design of the concept service Remix, it became evident how the users were not only meant to create creative product-based content, such as up-cycled and remixed products, but also immaterial entities, such as new knowledge, new skills, new style and new identities. Service Design could be used to further investigate how to design for symbolic production, such as style mediation, identity creation and knowledge transferal. This could be further researched together with business partners, or through a more speculative approach. Through this, the interconnectedness between fashion businesses, Service Design, value creation and cultural influence could be looked into, specifically in the direction of non-product based identity creation. In what way could Service Design assist in enhancing the intangible, cultural and symbolic practices of fashion, rather than the material production - and through this create new value?

Co-creation and co-production with the customer is a core part of Service Design, however when designing for experiential services such as within fashion, there may be a third role, that of *co-curator*. This role places the customer in a *knowledge broking* position, which will affect core aspects of the service experience, and could actively be designed for. The term might be a key part of designing for sustainable fashion services and will be followed up in further research.

One way forward - from product consumption to service experiencing

The intention behind this paper has been to outline one possible direction for fashion businesses to think beyond the traditional product focus, and into new opportunities for service innovation, as a step towards more sustainable fashion practices. Through operationalizing the Trendslation method presented in this paper, cultural material can be utilized in designing for more meaningful and highly experiential services in line with brand DNA and cultural influence, with a focus on experience throughout the customer journey. This is argued through using an exemplary case from my design work with a Global sports and lifestyle brand. The *experiential customer journey* and *experiential elements* are identified as important parts of designing for desirable service solutions. In addition, the customers new suggested role as *co-curator*, may serve as a valuable view in further research into the area of designing for sustainable fashion services. This paper also argues that the nature of service of providing experiences seemingly fits the fashion industry well.

As several prominent voices within sustainable fashion advocate for, the transformation of the fashion industry from a focus upon point of sale to a circular economy, is prominent (Fletcher, 2008; Niinimäki, 2013; Armstrong, 2013; Ræbild and Bang, 2018). In this transformational

process adding services to products are suggested through e.g. recycling, reusing, reselling. This suggests the need to introduce a journey mindset, thinking past the point of purchase and into the post-purchase phase. Customers need to be engaged and motivated to use such services, and there is a need for building stronger relationships between brand and consumer in this phase. This means that companies will necessarily have to move from selling products, to providing services.

This paper suggests how Service Design could assist in this move, through designing for experiences that offer alternative value. Utilizing the Trendslation method is a suggested way forward in designing for highly experiential and meaningful services, in line with trends and cultural influence – that can result in new service concepts that can move customers in a more sustainable direction. Fashion brands with a strong identity and cultural influence can help guide customers to more enlightened fashion consumption practices by offering services that create emotional value through offering experiences beyond the point of sale and throughout the customer journey and product lifecycle. With a focus on designing for highly experiential and more meaningful service experiences, bridging Fashion with Service Design could offer valuable synergies for moving away from product consumption and into *service experiencing*.

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Publication 4

Dennington, C. & Morrison, A. (under review, 2020). Designing for culturally located service encounters. *International Journal of Design*.

Designing for Culturally Located Service Encounters

This article discusses innovation in Service Design within a cultural frame. It argues for the translation of cultural phenomena and cultural trends into novel Service Design concepts. Termed *Trendslation*, the approach encompasses a triple-staged semantic transformation view. We explore this perspective to support service designers in the innovation phase of designing for culturally located service encounters. Central here are the roles, characteristics and potentials of design in investigating style, aesthetics and cultural phenomena in shaping the design of services. This is oriented towards designing for services that influence, and are influenced by, contemporary socio-cultural phenomena. In doing so we offer a practical approach to designing new services through the experiential service journey and culturally informed touch-points. The article includes three service design explorations with major service providers within food and fashion. These cultural domains are experience-based and consumption-driven, and interlinked with branding, identity and lifestyle. Drawing on the concept of the cultural intermediary, we unpack how service design may more fully adopt and enact a socio-cultural approach to shaping experiential services. We suggest closer links between the design of experiential services and culturally located service encounters may inform the further development and enactment of culturally infused views of Service Design.

Keywords **–** Cultural intermediary, Experiential, Fashion, Meaning-driven innovation, Trendslation, Service Design.

Relevance to Design Practice **–** This approach to Service Design can contribute to the design of innovative service concepts located in consumer- and lifestyle oriented domains, in line with contemporary cultural phenomena.

Introduction

Service Design, as a field and practice, has navigated from its formative work in commercial settings, such as telecom and banking (Clatworthy, 2013; da Motta Fihlo, 2017), through to healthcare and public services (Rygh, 2018; Sangiorgi, 2011). Currently, it appears to be taking a turn towards more culturally located, consumer-oriented and experience-based domains, such as within food and fashion (Armstrong, 2015; Ballantine-Brody, 2018; Author, 2018). Yet, to date, there is little research into relations between Service Design and culture, Cultural Studies and, more specifically, the role of service design and popular culture. However, novel service concepts connected to lifestyle and creative consumption are emerging. In the domains of e.g. food and fashion, we see new services arising that move past the generic and functional, into the meaning-driven and emotional. Such novel services are attuned to contemporary sociocultural phenomena. They offer experiential encounters across time, and through digital and physical touch-points. Their design elements are highly in line with current cultural codes and stylistic expressions. Such services can in turn influence contemporary culture by (re)framing value and

encourage new practices.

Fashion offers an interesting ground for Service Design to move towards, as new services that promote better fashion practices, such as rental, recycling and resale, are becoming more present. There is growing awareness around the environmental impact and social injustice the commercial fashion industry inflicts on people and planet (Fletcher, 2008). However, people still seek the novel experience of following and consuming fashion, and the pleasure and emotional satisfaction, status and identity creation that fashion products can provide (Fletcher, 2008). Fashion is a signifying practice through which meaning is generated and communicated, and a highly visible form of consumption that is influential in the sociocultural construction of identity (Crane, 2000; Barnard, 2002). It is a highly experiential domain with focus on desirability and value creation through style, aesthetics and branding. Fashion fluctuates in line with, towards and through sociocultural trends, and can be read as a popular cultural expression, reflecting popular attitudes (Crane, 2000). This prompts us to ask how to design services for the popular and *symbolic practices* of fashion (Fletcher, 2008).

Culturally located service design concepts suggest the expanding professional and culturally connected role of Service Design, and point towards new directions in which Service Design is increasingly cast in a meaning-driven and popular cultural framing (Matthews, 2017; Author, 2018). By designing new services that are based on 'cultural material', the service designer adopts an intermediary role. This role comes into play through the interpretation and translation of cultural influence through Service Design (Matthews, 2017; Author, 2018).

Towards Culturally Located Service Design

In this article we explore the design of culturally located service encounters. We ask how Service Design may adopt a cultural mediating position in the design of novel and culturally located services. We propose the need to orient Service Design within culture, and to integrate contemporary cultural movements into the further development of service design methodology. Through practice-based enquiry, we examine the service designer's act of meaning making through the interpretation and translation of sociocultural phenomena into service concepts and details. We investigate how this is activated through a semantic transformation process (Karjalainen, 2004) to further look into how the mediation and communication of meaning can relocate Service Design in a contemporary cultural landscape.

Through the application of sociocultural phenomena, or *trends,* as a Service Design material in the innovation phase, we explore meaning construction through style and aesthetics. The translation and application of trends is widely discussed and used in related design domains, such as within fashion design (Moultrie & Eckert, 2008; Pettinger, 2014). In Service Design, however, it seems existing and dominant service design approaches do not fully take into consideration the potential of utilizing contemporary cultural material in the innovation phase, with a lack of formalized or widespread method, tool or approach for such integration.

Background and Outline

This article describes work from a larger project connected to XXX (2013 – 2019); a research center jointly funded by XXX, educative- and business partners. *Trendslation* is an approach for meaning-driven service innovation that has been developed by the first author, in collaboration with students at XXX and business partners, to translate cultural phenomena into service concepts. The approach is used to explore the areas of meaning construction through cultural trends, aesthetics and style, and the notion of a triple-staged semantic transformation in Service Design.

The article is arranged as follows: First we discuss Service Design and the service designer's meaning-constructing and mediating role in a popular cultural frame. Secondly, we explain the methods, context and practices that lay the foundation for this research. We shortly describe three heuristic design cases that work from actual industry collaborations towards the shaping of two design cases illustrating and describing the *Trendslation* approach. Following these cases, the *experiential service journey* and the identification of *culturally informed touch-points* are discussed as possible contributions to service design practice. Finally we reflect upon some implications and possibilities of what we identify as 'the cultural intermediaries of Service Design'. In conclusion we suggest ways forward towards a cultural approach to Service Design Innovation.

Service Design and Cultural Intermediation

Design and Cultural Construction of Meaning

Paul du Gay et al. (2013) discuss the central role of design in the production, consumption and circulation of culture, through the designed object, and through the designer's role as creator. Meaning comes into play through the use and symbolic value people add to designed objects, as well as through mediation and communication of the product. In the consumer market, as within fashion, the brand construct itself is also regarded a vessel for cultural meaning, identity construction and self-expression (Holt, 2004). This view on the design- and brand characteristics as conveyers of meaning moves design from being merely functional and utilitarian to becoming desirable, meaningful and communicative (Julier, 2000; Krippendorff, 2005; Karjalainen, 2004).

In Product Design and within Cultures Studies the designer, and the designed object can be viewed as intermediaries of culture, through the signifying practices and objects of design (du Gay, 1998; Press & Cooper, 2003) and by extension into a creative ecology (Jung & Walker, 2018), and a popular, cultural economic view of design and innovation (e.g. Pratt & Jeffcutt, 2011). By interpreting and translating cultural influence into designed objects through design skills and knowledge, the designer becomes a conveyer of intrinsic meaning (Press & Cooper, 2003). Such intrinsic meaning can be communicated through the semantic characteristics and aesthetic qualities of the designed product (Krippendorff, 2005).

In such translation processes, the designer has a central role in this cultural circuit as one who frames and attaches meaning to products and services (du Gay et al., 2013), taking on a role as a *cultural intermediary*. Cultural intermediaries can be understood as "professionals engaged in the framing, dissemination and qualification of meanings and commodities in processes of symbolic (cultural) production" (Kuipers, 2014 p.43). Viewed as 'tastemakers', cultural intermediaries have

been argued as actors that mediate between production and consumption (Bourdieu, 1984).

More recently, cultural intermediaries are presented as mediators between culture and economy, as they construct value by framing and legitimatizing products, services, ideas and behaviours (Maguire & Matthews, 2012). When designing new services, we suggest that the service designer functions as a cultural intermediary.

Service Design in a Cultural Frame

Service Design has grown out of an interdisciplinary background, with roots in both product – and interaction design, and a strong relation to branding (Clatworthy, 2013; da Motta-Filho, 2017). The field and practice "represents the application of design as a creative and culturally informed approach to services" (Clatworthy, 2011), with a focus on designing for experiences over time, and through touch-points (Clatworthy, 2013). The recently identified direction of Service Design as a cultural intermediary (Matthews, 2017; Author, 2018) casts the domain further into the cultural sphere. Novel service design concepts that are located in contemporary culture seem to be influenced *by* culture – whilst also *influencing* culture. In this sense, the service designer and the service *design* become active in the construction, circulation and dissemination of cultural meaning (du Gay, 1998).

In Service Design discourse however, the term and concept of culture seems primarily linked to the view of culture as shared practices and values, representations, languages and customs of a given society (Hall, 1996), such as within e.g. organizational culture (e.g., Hyde & Davies, 2004) or local culture (e.g., Mazzarella, et al., 2018). This could suggest that Service Design mainly aligns with Raymond Williams (2009) view of culture as the ordinary and common meanings of everyday life. With Service Design entering domains of creative consumption, like fashion, we suggest expanding this cultural definition also into a more contemporary cultural view, in line with William's creative view – and with respect to a popular cultural understanding.

Popular culture can be regarded as the "the meanings and practice produced by popular audiences" (Barker & Jane, 2016 p. 60). In fashion, intricate symbiosis of consumption, representation and mediatization construct such meanings and practices with popular audiences. Media plays an inherent role in the dissemination of fashion (Shinkle, 2013), and the mediatization of brands enables co-creation of identity and value (Arvidsson, 2006). Such a contemporary cultural view is not yet much discussed within Service Design; still service design is both situated in, and relevant to contemporary culture and popular use in light of its intermediary and influential role. Looking towards the notion of popular culture may bring new perspectives to Service Design and practice, as co-construction of popular meanings.

The new services we see surfacing today, are highly aligned to the current cultural context they exist within. In a service view – we then ask if the design of experiential and context dependent touch-points can be viewed as cultural signifiers that contribute to frame meaning. The offering itself disseminates meaning through the new cultural practices if prompts, such as fashion re-use. There is a potential for the design of culturally located services to be situated in a contemporary and popular cultural framing through the social practices that arise by way of the

service offering, and through the design of culturally informed touch-points that can be read as cultural signifiers. The *Trendslation* approach presented later suggests how to design for novel service encounters by utilizing sociocultural trends as a means to convey intrinsic meaning, through *meaning-driven service innovation.*

Meaning Construction for Service Design Innovation

The notion of design-driven innovation, or meaning-driven innovation, views the innovation of the *meaning* of a designed product, rather than e.g. mere functional innovation, as a means to construct experiential, emotional or socio-cultural values (Verganti, 2009; Goey, et al., 2017). Such meaning-driven innovation can apply to the design of services too, suggested as meaning-driven service innovation (Author, 2017; Matthews, 2017). As in product, or fashion design - the translation of cultural phenomena can be one way forward for meaning-innovation in Service Design. From a Service Design view, one factor in Service Innovation can be seen as the design and development of new service concepts and offerings (Clatworthy, 2013). For fashion brands and businesses innovation in the meaning of novel service offerings or concepts could be communicated through the semantic characteristics of the service details, in line with the existing brand construct – which itself communicates cultural meaning and relevance.

Semantic Transformation in Service Design

Service Innovation has seen one major contribution to its wider socio-semiotic framework geared towards experiential meaning making building on the work of Karjalainen (2004). Karjalainen's model of semantic transformation in product design refers to the designer's translation of intangible brand values into tangible products that convey intrinsic meaning. Through stylistic and aesthetic characteristics and physical attributes the designed product communicates brand values. Karjalainen's approach, however, mainly focuses on product design and does not suggest how such semantic transformation may be developed to include a translation into the design of service specific details. To address this, the semantic transformation is suggested in Service Design. The service designer's interpretation of brand values, sacred or cultural material can be translated into service details, such as tone of voice, touch-points and behaviours, and contribute to the development of innovative services that convey intrinsic meaning (Clatworthy, 2013; da Motta-Filho 2017; Author, 2017, Matthews, 2016). Yet – there is a still a need for a more elaborate understanding of "service semantics" and more practical approaches to such translation.

Karjalainen's semantic transformation is one way to understand how the designer actively interprets brand values and shapes tangible products that convey symbolic value, through the semantic and signifying characteristics of the products aesthetic and stylistic qualities. However, as Service Design takes into account the design of both tangible and *intangible* elements, the semantic transformation approach alone seems insufficient to assist in meaning-construction throughout the design of every service detail.

A triple-staged semantic transformation for service innovation has been explored by the first author (2017; 2018), in which three stages of semantic translation have been presented as a possible

expansion. Considering the semantic transformation as a basis for the design of key product-based touch-points, there is also a need to better understand the meaning-construction that takes form through the non-physical and intangible elements of service design. We therefore ask how the service designer actively interprets cultural material, such as trends, to shape intangible services that convey symbolic value through the signifying characteristics of the service offering and details. This can take shape through the aesthetic and stylistic characteristics of the designed touch-points, but also extend into tone-of-voice, behavior, rituals and signifying practices.

Towards Service Style in Culturally Located Service Design

Style and aesthetics are crucial factors for meaning-construction and conveyance, and are broadly discussed in design related domains (Crane, 2012; Holt, 2004). In e.g. Fashion, style is seen to carry significant meaning – denoting shared values and beliefs to a community of like-minded. The use of specific fashion products can be interpreted as semantic and *stylistic codes* (Hebdige, 1979). Service Design, on the other hand, does not currently seem to attend much to service style or aesthetics. Holmlid (2007) suggests service aesthetics as experiential and highly visual, but a wider understanding of service aesthetics, and how to *design for* service aesthetics and style, is lacking. In a commercial context, style is seen as crucial for gaining competitive advantage (Muir Wood et al., 2008), which we believe is true, also for the design of services in commercial contexts.

The main aim of developing the *Trendslation* approach has been to explore how sociocultural trends can be utilized as an innovation material for service design, and how style and aesthetics convey intrinsic meaning in a service view. Further, how *Trendslation* addresses a semantic transformation process that occurs when translating trends into the design of service concepts and details. In Product Design, the designer's ability to translate trends into the stylistic and aesthetic characteristics of designed objects can prompt the design of products that are perceived as relevant, timely, meaningful, and emotional (Muir Wood et al., 2008; Postrel, 2003). Such products are largely acquired for reasons that surpass mere functional or technical aspects. In a similar manner, we investigate how the service designer can design for inspirational and emotional service encounters, to entice people into using certain services that aim to improve and inspire more sustainable consumption practices. We suggest that this can be achieved through designing for culturally located and meaningful service encounters.

Methods, Context and Practices

Methodology and Methods

Design Driven Inquiry

The article presents a design-driven action research approach (Villari, 2014) through qualitative inquiries situated in conceptual Service Design practice. These inquiries were carried out between 2016 and 2019 together with three business partners: two national and one global. In this, the first researcher participated as a design professional and practitioner, designing novel service design

concepts based on identified sociocultural trends. Acting as a designer-practitioner-researcher the researcher actively used her "body of expertise" accumulated from several projects, through her design practice (Vaughan, 2017). This entailed situating her decade-long practice within the areas of design, branding and concept development in the cultures industries. She also spent time embedded in the design team of the global partner, gaining first hand insight into a unique site of cultural production.

The explorative and open-ended iterative process was informed by the partners through meetings, presentations and feedback, which led to the development of service design concepts. These concepts acted as investigative "objects" (Seago & Dunne, 1999) that were used to analyze the steps of semantic transformation, but also took form as conversation tools, and organizational change agents. Through this, the design-production – the actual act of making and shaping through design, contributed to knowledge-construction in a research by, and through, design view (Frayling, 1993; Sevaldson, 2012).

Mixed Methods

A mixed methods approach was used to toggle between research methods and design tools and techniques (Lury, et al. 2018). Mixed methods were further used to extract and synthesize findings (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). This included several forms of visualization – visual diagramming, sketching, mood boarding, quick concept sketching, photographing, visual diarizing and visual essays. These methods were selected and documented throughout the inquiries to make for exploration, analysis, knowledge generation, communication, facilitation and discussion (Yee, 2017). Visualization was also used to illustrate aspects of the process and to articulate the design concepts.

Visual diagrams (Do & Gross, 2001) assisted in the sorting and structuring of the components, cycles and conceptualization of the *Trendslation* process. Sketching allowed for identification and reflection upon critical and influential design details (Cross, 2006), and to unveil implicit knowledge (Segelström, 2009). Moodboards (e.g., Koskinen, et al., 2011) were used to give prominence to the ideation of concepts, and to visually explain certain characterizations such as the look and feel of the partnering brands values, trends and user context. Quick concept sketching allowed us to rapidly communicate insights, ideas and service aspects to other designers, non-designers and partners (Segelström, 2010). Photographs were taken by the students and designer-researcher to provide visual contextual information of work in progress, as well as documentation of the larger design process (e.g. Harper, 2002). Visual diaries were developed (see Figure 2) to provide more interior views on "scaffolding knowledge" (Engin, 2011) and to create a dedicated space for reflection and reflexive practice (Schön, 1983; Nadin & Cassel, 2006). Visual essays (Hughes & Tolley, 2018) were used to analyze the semantic transformations embedded in the design projects. Three images have been selected from this array of methods to illustrate the manner and character of the methods adopted.
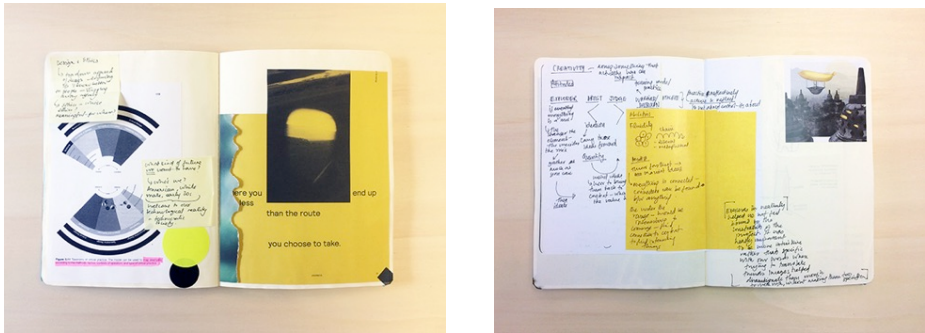
Figure 2. Visual reflection: Student example of mixed media thinking in her research diary. By P. Dudani, 2018.

The design work of the first author was carried out in parallel to co-teaching and supervising two separate master's level courses in 2017 and 2018, using the *Trendslation* approach. The courses involved 17 students at XXX who designed approximately 48 Service Design concepts. Exhibition played a role in presenting and discussing the design work. First, the students presented a total of ten final concepts to two of the industry partners. Second, the students' concepts were exhibited at XXX, creating a contextual design rich space for further investigating the potential relationship between design practice, reflection and research, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Communicating concepts: Design rich and contextual space for exhibiting student work. By MA-students, XXX, 2018.

Three Contextual Explorations of Cultural Service Design Innovation

The Service Design approach *Trendslation* has been shaped through three open-ended and explorative research through design processes, where each design exploration has informed the next.

Two Service Design concepts from the third case/exploration are further used to illustrate and discuss the suggested approach.

Exploration #1

The first collaborative design intervention was carried out together with a national grocery chain in Norway in 2016, over a period of three months. The experiential opportunities in a product-focused domain were explored through cultural trends, such as ones regarding food and packaging waste, accessibility, family policy and local and sustainable produce. These were utilized to innovate new service concepts addressing awareness around contemporary food and lifestyle issues. The design result was a service for children promoting healthy eating, and an innovation lab for the brand. This process and result, together with the service designers' earlier personal work, instigated the notion of sociocultural trends as a possible innovation material. In focus was the meaning-creation that takes form through the designers' interpretation, representation and communication of cultural material in which the service designer is cast in a cultural intermediary position in shaping design innovation.

Exploration #2

Exploring this notion further, the second design intervention was carried out with a national fashion brand for young women between February and June 2017. This intervention introduced existing brand values as an additional framework for meaning-creation, together with identified cultural trends relating to better fashion practices. It resulted in service concepts that had a high level of aesthetic and stylistic features. Such features, including tone of voice and service personality, were explored through visual techniques of sketching and mood boarding, where physically intervening with images materialized meaning through their careful curation (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Curating meaning: the selection and arrangement of images construct and re-construct meaning. By author, 2017.

This exploration also revealed how statement products could become key touch-points as part of an experiential journey. One example was the Better Bag, a physical product based on cultural input to inspire customers to recycle clothing. The bag, shown in Figure 6, would function as a key touch-point for a free pick-up service, while itself signifying cultural capital through its contemporary aesthetics and style.

Figure 6. Signifying cultural capital: Experiential touch-point promoting better fashion practices. Photo: author, 2019

The innovation potential of the trends in line with the brand values, beyond the product, was further investigated. This led to the shaping of service concepts that spread the cultural influence throughout the service experience, into every detail of the encounter. This intervention shed light on the service designer's intermediary role in translating certain cultural codes into specific service details, and the communication of these through visually rich images, sketches and prototypes. It also served to cast the design concepts and experiential touch-points in a cultural frame as these promoted new cultural production, conveyance and use.

Exploration 3

The third exploration was carried out together with a global sports and lifestyle brand between January and May 2018. The focus here was on using cultural trends as innovation material in designing new services. We drew on the broader semantic turn to meaning in terms of cultural experience, expression and enactment. These key elements were connected to Karjalainen's approach to semantic transformation for brand recognition and visual consistency (2004). Consequently, cultural trends, style and aesthetics were taken up and explored as factors for conveying intrinsic meaning of designed services.

Trendslation – utilizing cultural trends as an innovation material

In summary, *Trendslation* came to be understood - experimentally, expressively and experientially - as a practical Service Design approach that utilizes cultural trends as an innovation material to design for novel Service Design concepts with experiential consistency. These aspects of *Trendslation* offer the service designer support through three acts of semantic translation, and they pose conceptual resources in developing innovative service concepts.

Designing Cultural Services

Connecting Culture and Services

To explore these possibilities, we next refer to two conceptual case examples of service design concepts that are located within a specific commercial fashion context. These examples are drawn from the design work of the first author carried out with the global sports and lifestyle brand through the third exploration. This partnering brand is a major actor with influence in popular culture such as media, music and street fashion (Romero, 2012; Choi & Kim, 2019). The brand construct itself functions as a cultural intermediary, suggesting dynamic relations between brand, media and user – casting the design of services in such a context into a popular cultural and shared meaning-making sphere. The examples illustrate the steps of semantic translation, and discuss the intermediation of cultural constructs through the *Trendslation* approach.

Towards Experiential Meaning Construction

The first example, *Go,* is a service concept for boutique and branded training facilities at airports in key cities. This service concept is based on sociocultural trends concerning health and wellbeing, increase in mental disorders connected to stress and anxiety, new travel patterns, customized training and urban sports, amongst others. Through this concept the focus in designing shifted from the product (sports wear) to the experience (stress relief through physical activity), enhanced by experiential touch-points over time, that were aligned to the brand and the core characteristics of the trends. By shifting the aesthetic and stylistic characteristics of these touch-points, the conveyance of meaning could be altered. It did so through the signifying characteristics of the curated visual representation.

Shaping Semantic Transformations

In the first stage of *Trendslation* – the service designer actively constructed and conveyed new meaning, through curating semantic representations, and arranging them in distinct patterns to form specific expressions in an expanded version of a moodboard towards a contemporary and *culturally encoded* experience board (see Figure 7). Through this the identified user's cultural context was realised in light of the trends, of aesthetic language, sociocultural practices, products and preferences, visual and cultural clues, key experiential and semantic characteristics. These were closely aligned to the existing brand values, for further ideation and meaning-construction. As meaning is not merely "floating out there", but is generated through signs (Barker & Jane, p.09), the service designer can use visual representations as signifiers to convey intended meaning, and further
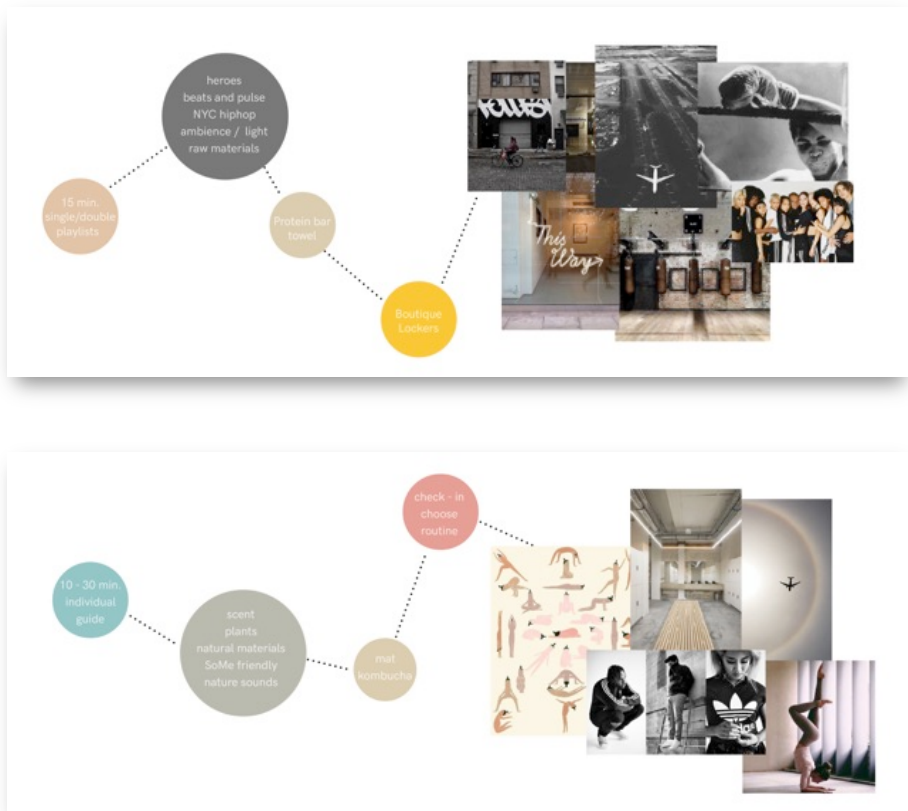
use this meaning-centered activity as a basis to develop a new value proposition centered on experience.

Figure 7. Cultural contextualization: realizing key experiential and semantic characteristics in an experience board. By author, 2018

Such an act of meaning making is highly intuitive and subjective, and has no one right configuration. However, the ability of the service designer to communicate this cultural knowledge through rich experiential visual representations is crucial at this stage. Representations of this sort may assist in the shared interpretation of meaning with co-designers, business partners and non-designer team members, again with the service designer located in an intermediary position. The development of such boards may also be co-created by a team in an explorative phase that aims to promote and strengthen shared understanding and interpretation of meaning. The service designer as a cultural, as well as service intermediary is realized through their enactment of a curatorial role. It is through this role that the service designer intervenes, innovates and orients the selection of the sources of cultural input for the externalization of the design of the service via an experience board. Through these interlinked roles the service designer is able to further explore the cultural landscape of the identified user, and widen their input and experience by adopting an intermediary role.

Ideating the Aesthetic and Stylistic

The second semantic transformation stage becomes apparent through the service designer's translation of the cultural knowledge and material already gleaned further into the ideation phase. The turn here is into actively using meaning that has been constructed to develop new service offerings. These offerings may be communicated through quick concept sketches that convey the experiential factors of the service, and that capture and express a curated version of key experiential touch-points. In addition the main offering, context, tone of voice, personality, user and other related elements are conveyed through simplified service journeys (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Sketching journeys: The same core offering in two service concepts, while experientially diverse. By author 2018.

Stylistic Service Journey

To convey this curated, experience-centric and style-focused journey across time and through experiential touch-points, the concept of a *stylistic service journey* was developed. Adding the stylistic into the traditional concept of the service journey serves to assist in the further detailing and development of the cultural orientation of this service concept. Such stylized journeys may also function as conversation pieces with partners in developing inputs and parameters in the early conceptual stage. The stylistic service journey can be seen as a crossover between the traditional service journey - as a mapping of touch-points over a timeline (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2012) and a moodboard as a visual elicitation of intangible values (servicedesigntools.org). The goal is to convey and communicate the experiential and stylistic qualities of the service encounters throughout a timeline.

Through such a mapping, it became apparent how the core offering of a service concept

could persist in the development of several versions of the same service, while the experiential aspects of the service encounters shifted by utilizing specific and curated cultural representations. When applying the concept of the stylistic service journey to the development of *Go*, it was possible to include the exact same interactions and touch-points throughout the journey, while the overall stylistically realized journey showed how the experience could be shifted and altered by detailing the experiential elements in line with cultural trends. As a stylistic, service experience entity, each and every detail was designed and curated to contribute to a holistic and meaning-driven experience (see Figure 9).
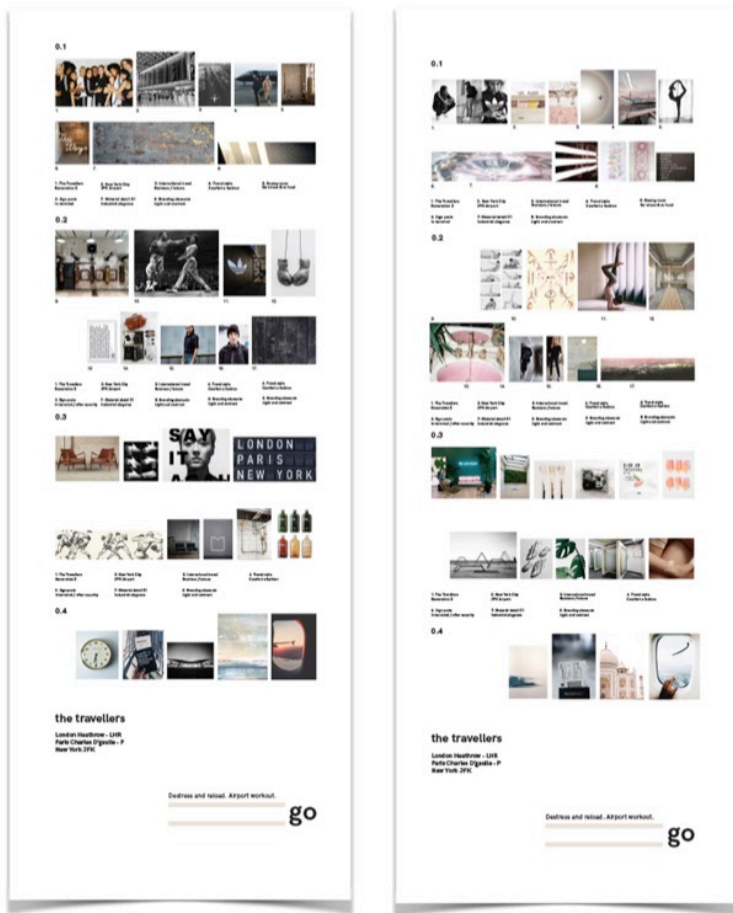

Figure 9. Curated communication: core offering, interactions and touch-points stay similar, while curated representations alter the experiential aspects. By author, 2018.

Co-curating Stylistic Content-rich Services

To further illustrate the *Trendslation* approach, the second selected example called *Remix* centered on stylistically oriented services that were content-rich. *Remix* offers a space for creative individuals with high cultural status to remake and resell pre-owned branded products, and to co-create and *co-curate* (xxx, 2018) editorial, educational and inspirational content related to style, identity, urban sports and street culture. The identified trends that were explored and expanded were related to the brands core user. They revolved around new gender roles, a rise in political awareness, fluid identity constructs and trends related to hacking, making and playfulness, linked to the notion of being free to express oneself and the fluid and dynamic social, creative and professional roles of the target user.

Meaning Construction through Semantic Translation of Trends

The meaning that was identified related to the notion of 'creating ones own rules'. This referred to key characteristics of the trends, in the cultural context of the users. The generation of such rules was further looked into through existing and innovative contemporary cultural practices. One example was the deconstruction and reconstruction of brands, where the users were seen to not only create new products, but new knowledge, new style, new voices and new rules. This was first synthesized and translated into an experience board (see Figure 10), then second translated into an experience centric value proposition in line with the existing brand DNA to assist the brand in framing new, or re-framing existing, service offerings.
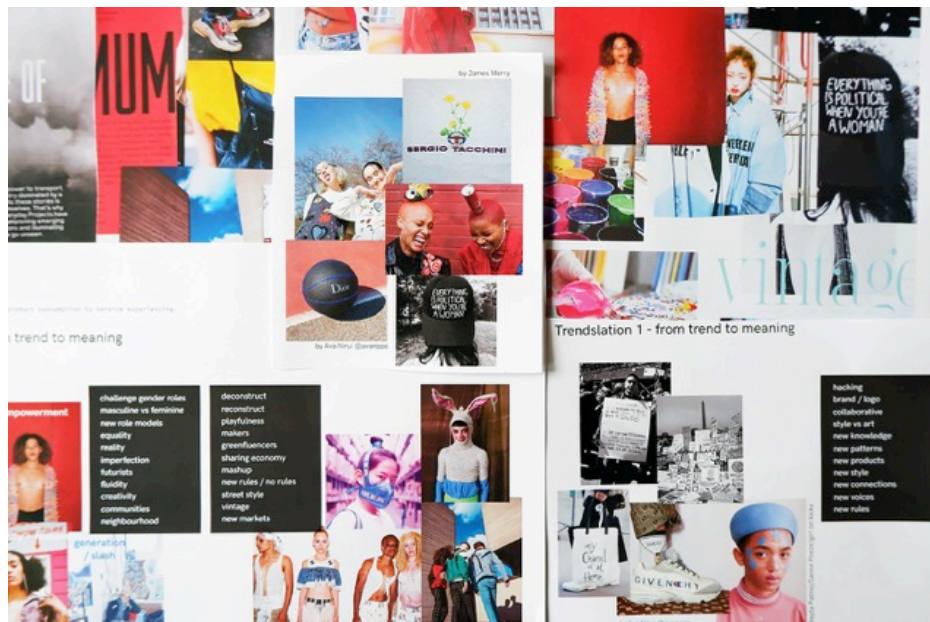

Figure 10. Semantic translation: from trends and brand value into new practices. By author, 2018.

Meaning Construction through Semantic Translation into Service Offering

The focus on meaning construction through semantic translation of trends was then shifted to focus on exploring meaning construction through semantic translation that centered on the design of a service offering. In this shift, the service concept *Remix* was connected to hacking, re-constructing and re-designing pre-owned branded fashion items, and the creation and sharing of creative content related to urban sports and style (See Figure 9). Consequently, focus was on the skills and knowledge of the brand community. This included contribution from the brands concept store employees, who are often viewed as brand ambassadors possessing high cultural capital, and other creative individuals that are up-to-date on the contemporary cultural scene.
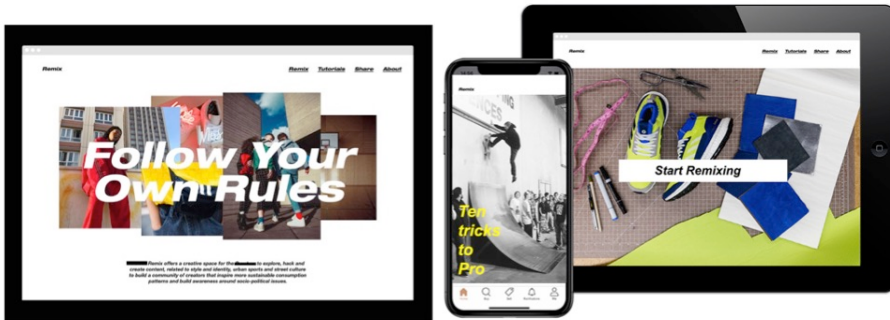

Figure 9. Experiential consistency: the aesthetic details convey a holistic style. Mockups of *Remix* digital touch-points. By author & D. Nerheim, 2018.

Throughout the service encounters individuals are encouraged to create "new" products, by up-cycling, re-designing and hacking pre-used branded fashion items, constructing new meaning through their creative practice, and through the objects they create. The brand's main concept stores function as meeting places. They achieve this by offering workshops, maker and exhibition spaces, as well as rental and repair of sports gear and products. This provided people with the opportunity to "remix" their identity through trying different urban sports that were linked to the brand. Physical and digital experiences rooted in contemporary cultural practices further enhanced the cultural influence of the *Remix* concept.

Meaning Construction through Semantic Translation into Experiential Elements

The final semantic translation by the service designer is apparent through the design of experiential elements (xxx, 2018), such as *culturally infused touch-points*, to reinforce the meaning-construction through the service journey. Culturally infused touch-points can be defined as *touch-points that are chosen or designed to reflect contemporary culture, and that denote intrinsic meaning through their aesthetic and stylistic characteristics.* Additional experiential elements can include ones related to tone-of-voice, sensory details, symbolic gestures, rituals, business models or time-based elements. To engage and motivate people throughout the service journey culturally infused touch-points can be designed to communicate experiential qualities and intended meaning, by incorporating specific

styles of e.g. photo, illustration, music, clothing, graphic design etc.

One example from the *Remix* concept revealed the specific format and articulation of a fanzine, rather than a generic "magazine" or "printed material", showed how details such as theme, image style, size, paper quality, tone-of-voice, colours and fonts, all contributed to a cultural, experiential and meaning-driven enrichment of the touch-point (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Cultural articulation: specifying the format of a fanzine contributes to an enrichment of the touch-point. By D. Nerheim, 2018.

Findings and Discussion

An Expanding Cultural Role for Service Design

As Service Design is expanding professionally into new domains, its roots in product and interaction design – and its strong relation to branding and experience (Clatworthy, 2013; da Motta-Filho, 2017), suggest there is a need to view Service Design in a cultural intermediary framing. The design interventions shown in this article have led to some key findings:

- Sociocultural trends can be utilized as innovation material in service design
- Service Design acts as a cultural intermediary in several arenas and contexts
- Service Design in a cultural framing needs to develop new practical tools and approaches
- Service Design may be shaped by and through popular cultural resources

The designer's role as a translator of cultural trends into designed artifacts, and meaning-construction through embodying semantic characteristics in design, is pertinent in the Service Design process too. This confirms the cultural role and influence of both the service designer and Service Design, as a field and practice. Actively seeking and applying cultural trends in the innovation phase can assist in the design of culturally located and novel service concepts and details, ones that are timely and inspirational, that are meaning-driven and experiential. This view presents the service designer, and the design of services, in a sociocultural, and socio semiotic framing.

In developing Service Design towards a cultural and consumer-oriented domain, designing for new services in e.g. fashion, style determined and aesthetic characteristics need to be represented to capture and communicate the intended experience. Aesthetic and stylistic representations of key touch-points and other experience-based elements can be visualized throughout the service journey to convey and communicate a curated experience, and to evoke intuitive and emotional responses. The aesthetic and stylistic refers here about communicating cultural expressions, like practices and products, in the sociocultural context of the user via collages - constructing relations and patterns, including colour, popular cultural media resources, and a plurality of image types. This requires culturally rich and diverse experience and expertise on the part of the service designer working experientially in designing new services.

Reflection on Service Design Innovation and The Cultural Intermediary

In further exploration of the cultural intermediary notion in Service Design, we suggest there is a need to discuss the potential of the cultural intermediaries *of* Service Design.

Service Designer Intermediaries

The service designer acts as a cultural intermediary through using design knowledge and design skillsets, as well as a personal cultural repository, to translate cultural influence into the semantic, aesthetic and communicative characteristics of the services designed. Through design-rich and visual representations the designer can construct, convey and communicate meaning, which can be further interpreted by other designers and non-designers. The service designer also attains an intermediary position through the design of services that promote dynamic relationships between use, production, mediatization and consumption within areas such as fashion and lifestyle, influencing and articulating cultural practices and texts.

Frontline Service Intermediaries

For culturally located service concepts, the service employees play key roles as cultural intermediaries through their cultural knowledge, as *frontline service intermediaries* (Maguire & Matthews, 2012 p. 10). These frame value for customers through displaying, sharing and mediating new practices and touch-points. They also curate experiential elements such as fashion items, music and images shared on social media platforms.

Key User Intermediaries

The user may also be placed in an intermediary role, through contributing to this cyclic interplay of use and mediation, within specific sites of cultural production. The cultural intermediary role suggests that the people involved in the service encounter are not only subjected to become co-creators, but also *co-curators* (Author, 2018) of the service encounters.

The Service Offering

The examples illustrate how the service offering could be viewed in an intermediary position through its influence on sociocultural practices, such as new ways of "consuming" pre-owned fashion products. The case example *Remix* shows how the service offering itself, through offering new ways of consuming, using and reusing fashion, becomes a cultural intermediary, actively constructing new meaning.

Culturally Infused Touch-points

Key experiential touch-points and elements that are designed or curated, and influenced by contemporary culture, could be read as cultural texts. This places such touch-points in intermediary positions. These signify symbolic and intrinsic meaning, and could possibly be used as identity creators. One example is the up-cycled products in the *Remix* example, which could inhere such symbolic value. Another is how the concept stores become sites of cultural production. Experiential elements such as hashtags or social media posts can further contribute to constructing the individuals' cultural capital, through which identity constructs are shared and mediated. The design of culturally informed touch-points may have an influential role - impacting cultural production, and the production of culture through the use and mediatization of cultural resources and means of engagement. The curated, up-cycled and remixed products transform into key experiential touch-points functioning as cultural intermediaries.

These cultural intermediaries may further be framed by broadly unpacking key elements in what we formulates as *experiential Service Design, cultural service innovation* and *cultural Service Design.*

Experiential Service Journey

In practical terms, an important finding that came to light through the design process of designing experiential and culturally located service concepts like *Remix*, was how the traditional service journey became insufficient in conveying and communicating the experiential and stylistic qualities of the service encounters. This instigated the development of *The Experiential Service Journey* - a service journey centered on experiential factors and trends, based on the earlier introduced *stylistic journey*, as a more detailed version. A tool as *The Experiential Service Journey* could be further developed into a more structured approach by translating such aesthetic elements into more extensive, systemic operational levels.

Reflections on Trendslation

The *Trendslation* approach suggests a possible way forward in the design of content rich, experientially consistent and culturally located service concepts. It promotes the service designer's role as a conveyer and communicator of cultural material and meaning through the services she designs. Through such an approach, the service designer, and thereby Service Design, takes a more active role in the contemporary circuit of culture (du Gay et al., 2013), by designing services influenced by contemporary and popular cultural motifs and experiences. In addition, political economies and their cultural referents are themselves in transition in the face of climate change, resource re-use and the context of 'circular economic' views (e.g., De los Rios & Charnley, 2017).

Three Key Elements in a Contemporary Cultural View on Service Design

A Cultural Negotiation of Services

From the experience of working with major business partners it became apparent how the actual act of service designing can contribute in the turn towards new economies and business models, such as circular economic ones. Economic aspects of Service Design have been presented mainly in relation to Pine and Gilmore's work on the *Experience Economy* (1999), were the deliverance of customer-centric service experiences are seen as key to gain positive economic advantage. Service Dominant Logic further presents value as co-created by use of the service, and as an exchange between service provider, actors and users (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

We see that from a design view on Service Design, design competency can be used to assist businesses in conceptualising, visualising and realizing novel service offerings in line with emerging, possibly circular, economic models (Niinimäki, 2017). This we see as a design-based approach that can help create new value by identifying culturally negotiated experiences customers may enjoy, expect and perhaps come to demand in changing economic contexts. We forsee that this may be a future aspect in the further development of what we term *'the cultural negotiation of Service Design'*.

Co-creating Cultural Service Value

It is almost two decades since Norton (2003) stated from a marketing view how people were demanding more valuable and meaningful experiential opportunities. This seems ever more true with the rise and development of new business models that are reliant on customer engagement and motivation to participate in value co-creation (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014). As traditional product focused businesses turn towards models that include rental, sharing and reuse (Armstrong et al., 2015), and by this introducing new cultural practices, attention needs to be given to how to design for services promoting new business models. The rise of experiential services show that there is economic value in such new business models.

However, to gain competitive advantage, businesses need to actively engage experiential and meaning-driven factors. Similarly, the details and design of the service needs to be culturally located in line with current cultural conversations and aligned with people's contextual worldviews. The successful design of such experiential factors can engage and motive people to adopt new

practices and produce new cultural meaning. We call this the *'co-creation of cultural service value'*. This too we suggest is an area worthy of future design and research, as shifts appear from the experience to the circular economy. Recent research in fashion, for example, has already engaged in these debates - in and through design - and this may suggest ways for Service Design to look critically at its own roles in shaping design-consumption, values and relationships.

Re-framing Cultural Service Value

Product focused businesses could look towards Service Design and related innovation to develop new service offerings that contribute to value-creation throughout a timeline. Towards a circular and more sustainable business future, the question of value needs to be re-framed beyond mere economic value also in the business domain, and into "new", or symbolic value – such as social, educational or emotional value. Questions around for whom businesses are creating value also need to be addressed from a service view.

In our view, "meaningful services" should also be perceived as meaningful to frontline employees and back-stage workers as service employees are potential cultural intermediaries. As a consequence, new services built around new business models also call for new legislation and regulation, bringing Service Design closer to the realms of political economy. Challenging the more traditional experience economic view of Service Design could be one way forward to create new paths between meaning-driven service innovation, business model innovation and the realms of a wider cultural political economy (Best & Paterson, 2010). Again this would draw Service Design into deeper dialogues with the practice and study of culturally infused innovation, including extending this to emergent trends and cultural expressions. We term this '*a cultural anticipatory Service Design innovation approach'*, one that draws on links between innovation, business design and futures studies (Author et al. 2019).

Conclusions

A Cultural Approach to Service Design Innovation

The past two decades in particular have seen massive expansion in the domain of Design. Following on the tails of Interaction Design, and the assertion of the communicative and the cultural, not only the technical and the infrastructural, Service Design has begun to make similar shifts from a focus on the managerial and procedural to the realization of services for consumers whose needs, interests and experiences are central. A culturally framed view of Service Design places the service designer and the design work of service design into a mediating position.

We argue that the concept of the cultural intermediary is useful in further exploring and expanding the semantic translation of Service Design from earlier product related views to more culturally located and articulated ones. Here services may be more fully designed and experienced as situated, sensory and socio-semiotic, acknowledging further the dynamics of their affective and performative co-creation, enactment and circulation. This allows us to engage in the design and

analysis of encounters that involve recognition of our sensibilities, values, feelings and thoughts in service design encounters that are connected to cultural settings of use, communication and exchange. In our view, analytically speaking in terms of Service Design, this extends the notion of the cultural intermediary to the mediated meaning making of culturally enacted experiential exchanges in service encounters. We propose that there is room to develop what we call *'a culturally inflected view of Service Design'*.

However, we see that there is also potential to frame services themselves as cultural acts more broadly. Well-designed services engage us culturally in everyday activities and transactions, in work and leisure. They are also part of the ways culture is increasingly connected through design, such as when we move through cities as cultural settings, and engage in service inflected expressions of personal taste and related consumption activities. A cultural view on Service Design then also helps connect to how we are implicated as participants in changing economic conditions and modes of exchange, and culturally articulated and distributed patterns and practices of not only use, but re-use. In this respect, Service Design is central to wider processes of reshaping relations between services and goods, and their symbolic and cultural values.

Conceptual, Creative and Communicative Service Design

We suggest that service designers' interpretation, translation and construction of meaning needs to be communicated through design-rich and creative, conceptual Service Design. Here design spans the conceptual, creative and communicative relating to the service encounter, how that encounter is offered, and ways it is taken up in use situations. We have argued that accentuating the experiential is a necessary part of the ongoing shaping and extending of notions and practices of designing and developing services.

We see a need for new approaches to locate Service Design culturally and that connect the design of such services such as the suggested *Trendslation*, and new tools such as the experiential service journey, including the notion of culturally infused touch-points. The experiential is drawn from a perspective for an overall service journey and encounter, in the processes of design activity. This makes it possible to construct the user's projected engagement with the service from their own point of view, and to extend this into actual and even plural contexts of enactment where a service is firmly located in cultural activities. There is also room, we suggest, for the design of services to be more widely appreciated as cultural aspects in their own right, and most likely ones that will become more prevalent in the ongoing interplay of a diversity of domains of design, culture and innovation.

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Claire Dennington

REFASHIONING SERVICE DESIGN
Designing for popular cultural service experience

In the entanglement of people, touch-points, interactions and experiences that shape services, meaning is constructed and circulated. However, in service design research and practice, limited attention has been given to the dynamic interplay of meaning and value set in motion through service design.

This thesis explores new connections between service design and concepts from popular culture from a practice perspective. It inquires experiential ways of translating cultural phenomena to innovate conceptual services through an overall research through design mode, in partnership with national and global lifestyle brands. The study further investigates the notion of the cultural intermediary within service design, and practical means to facilitate the service designer when designing for services that are culturally located, enacted and experienced.

The research contributes to a broader understanding of the potential cultural roles and prospective of the field and practice of service design. It offers a practical and experiential approach and tool for trend-transformation to novel service offerings and details, when designing for meaningful service experiences embedded in popular culture.

Claire Dennington is a service design researcher, practitioner and lecturer. She holds a master's degree from AHO (2007). Over the past 15 years she has been working in the intersection of service design, branding and innovation within cultural and lifestyle-oriented sectors. She currently teaches service design at the vInstitute of Design at AHO, and is partner in Reform Projects, a studio rethinking and reinventing products, processes and services to help reform tomorrow's fashion and lifestyle industry. Her research was carried out as part of the Centre for Service Innovation (CSI).