

Touchpoint

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Cultural Change by Service Design

Living Service Worlds – How Will
Services Know What You Intend?

Shelley Evenson

Complete Small, Affordable and
Successful Service Design Projects

By Chris Brooker

A Time Machine for Service
Designers

By Julia Leihener and Dr. Henning Breuer

From Field Stories to Strategic Design

Practicing interpretation skills at SDNC 2012



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As designers and innovators of services, we try to step into the shoes of those who will be using and delivering the services we create. We need to empathise with them to understand what value we can create, what problems we might solve or what interactions between people we should facilitate. Observing and listening are important skills to get into these shoes, but they are not enough. We also need to be storytellers, because we must bring the everyday experiences of people into the design and strategy teams that imagine and then help create services. How can we bring the stories to these teams and how can we help them work with those stories? How can we make the stories stick to the design process from start to finish and keep them useful all along? How do we support design and business decisions with clear evidence from everyday life?

COLLECTING, STRUCTURING AND ANALYSING STORIES

Design research typically goes through a number of stages, from preparation to analysis and interpretation.

1. Right at the start, business constraints need to be recognised and prioritised, because they likely influence the way that the fieldwork capture methods and the unit of analysis (the basic data elements that you aim to collect, e.g. a customer journey) are initially

designed. The way you plan to communicate the research should also influence your choice of capture method and unit of analysis. Film provides a different type of evidence than do photos when it comes to communicating your results.

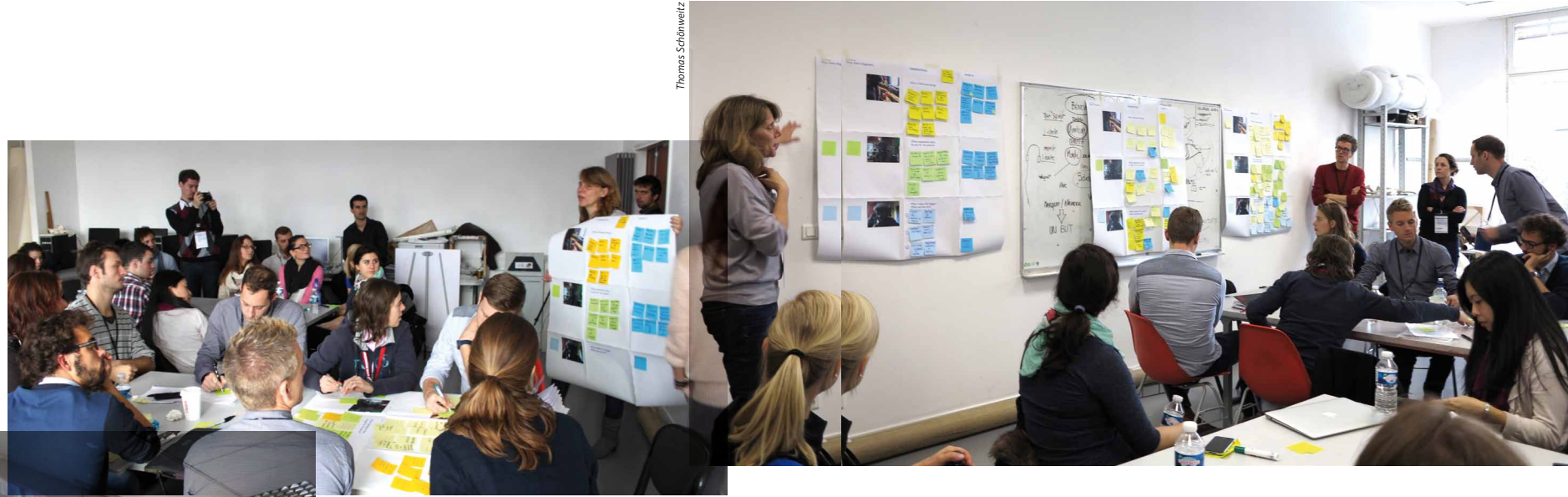
2. Once in the field, you need to collect data in the format and using the methods that you have designed. This can be a challenge because the environment in which you

find yourself isn't always what you anticipated. That is part of the joy of the work: everyday life is not predictable. It is a combination of routines and surprises. The skill to develop here is to embrace the surprises encountered in the field without breaking the designed research structure, although you may need to bend or stretch it. You should come away from the field with data that will put you in a good position to create the unit of analysis that was specified earlier.

3. Fieldwork data needs to be structured to make it accessible to others and analysed to a certain extent to result in a collection of units of analysis. These units can be used to communicate stories from the field. If the data is captured on film, as STBY often does, the unit of analysis can be a short and concise edited film. Each film could tell a single story in two or three minutes, including the participant behaviour (practices) and motives as expressed by themselves. The editing of the film can be done in such a way as to add the findings of the design researchers in the field, which may add more participant motives. Nevertheless, the stories should remain open to further interpretation, as more analysis is to follow.

4. Analysing and interpreting the fieldwork results is the next step, in which the teams are seeking a deeper understanding of the practices and motives of the fieldwork participants, often focused on a particular topic such as: 'How do people keep themselves entertained while on the move?' Here the data is presented in the format of the unit of analysis specified earlier, to provide a clear starting point. Collaborative sense-making with service design and strategic teams gives the best results, because the insights created are owned by the teams that helped create them. This stage will be elaborated upon in the remainder of this article.

5. Even after its first use, the data that is clearly formatted in the unit of analysis still remains valuable. It could answer other questions in the future. When the data is re-ordered, new collections of films can be curated that, using different lenses of analysis, help to develop quick perspectives on design, strategy or business questions. It is then no longer necessary to carry out additional fieldwork to answer these questions, a huge advantage in terms of money and time.



Thomas Schönwieser



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Workshop at the Service Design Global Conference 2012

MAKING SENSE OF PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY PRACTICES

Analysing the data is a skill in itself. This skill was introduced and practised in a workshop during the 2012 Global Service Design Network Conference in Paris by STBY and Nokia, who have gone through the process outlined above many times over recent years. The process proposed in the workshop followed three steps. The material used for analysis was a single three-minute film of a Londoner visiting a record shop on Portobello Road while talking about his love of music and the joy and trouble that this love had brought him. The richness of the material was illustrated by the time spent on analysing it: over 1.5 hours of analysis of that short film.

1. The first round of analysis focuses on on practices: What does the participant do? In this film, for instance, he browses the record sleeves in the vinyl section, checks out the posters of blaxploitation films on the walls and hesitates before leaving because he hears an interesting song.

2. During the second viewing, the focus shifts to personal motives: what motives does the participant mention for their behaviour? In this case, the participant mentions his interest in the circumstances in which the artists made their music, because it helps him to understand how a particular record was created and how creativity works in general.

3. A third viewing allows focus on further, perhaps deeper, motives that are not expressed literally by the participant but are interpretations of the viewer: what motives do we understand as design researchers (or anyone in the service design and strategy teams who has taken on that role temporarily)? Here, it was possible to interpret that the participant feels at home in the shop and puts effort into being part of a certain black music culture.

These different levels of understanding also give rise to different types of opportunities, once teams start to speculate and create 'What if?' scenarios for each of the three levels of

understanding. Bringing all these levels together gives the deepest understanding and the richest opportunities. In a two hour workshop, these levels of understanding and the different types of creative speculation were all practiced and explored.

CONCLUSION

Such deep understanding created by a team, rather than just a few design researchers who were in the field themselves, does not emerge magically all by itself. It requires a solid research methodology, executed with an open mind in the field, that delivers a clear unit of analysis as the basis of joint interpretation by the service design or strategy team. Such a unit of analysis allows for a structured analysis on several levels, from practices to motivations. This can happen more than once, because well-structured research data can be re-used later to answer other research questions. Every time, the results of the analysis support business decisions with structured and rigorous information that informs the design and development process. ●