Track 3.d Introduction: How does design express value?

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A general view, often presented in a political context, suggests investment in design may create societal benefits, like economic growth, employment, competitiveness, and convenience. Conducted at a general level with aggregate variables, such measurements provide very limited insights and can even be misleading. A different approach takes a particular view of a designed artefact, object, system or service. Addressing the benefactors, users and consumers, we may be able to reach an individual value, which in turn may be aggregated to assess a market, KPI or similar.

How does design express value? And how can we measure the value?

To design is to create value for somebody. However, the value depends on who judges it and their and their personal values.

According to John Heskett;

"Design, stripped to its essence, can be defined as the human capacity to shape and make our environment in ways without precedent in nature that serves our needs and gives meaning to our lives". (Heskett, 2005).

This suggests that artefacts, objects, systems and services, which are available to us, may influence and serve us in different ways depending on our position within a particular environment. Any artefact may affect our physical well-being. This reflects preferences and other values may essentially be emotions and feelings.

The four presentations represent a comprehensive view on how design create value, ranging from the more conceptual issues to the applications and applied situations where design is valuable.

Design capabilities for the evolution of value creation by Nicola Morelli, Amalia de Götzen, Luca Simeone Aalborg University, Denmark deals with the fundamentals of design as creation of value:

The process of value creation is not an exclusive preserve of designers, but the result of a diffuse problem solving capability. The creation of new value connected to the concept of innovation and can happen in different logical contexts, from limited and confined contexts (niches) to consolidated structures (regimes) and to wider sociotechnical contexts (landscapes). In all those contexts, design has a different role and whoever designs use different capabilities and tools. Furthermore, design capabilities are useful when aligning value creation and change in different levels, thus contributing to understand the relationships between small-scale interactions and wider scale transformation of sociotechnical landscapes. This paper proposes a framework to understand the contribution of design to the value creation process at the three levels, focusing on design capabilities and tools to work across different logical contexts.

Voorberg, van Buuren & Brinkman locate design thinking in connection with public services:

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Design thinking is increasingly expected to create value by including service users in the fundamental aspects of services. In order to create value, the design approach needs to be ‘translated’ into an applicable framework, appropriate for the public domain. Therefore, we first explore what kind of value is generated within the public domain. Subsequently, by focusing on well-known contributions from the design literature, they review what can be learned from design approaches for value creation with users. They examine what kind of specific characteristics of the public domain needs to be taken into consideration, when one aims to apply a design-oriented approach in the public domain. Ultimately, we conclude how the design approach can be made applicable within the public domain. In doing so, this paper aims to formulate stepping-stones for both academics and policy makers.

Wang and other locate design with branding: Emergent trends of co-branding strategies are increasingly being utilized in fashion marketing and retailing; as such, the role of design is becoming paramount in collaborative partnerships when devising co-branding strategies. In particular, designers are central to the process of collaborative partnerships when developing highly novel products more that are attractive to demanding consumers. This paper critically examines the role of cobranding strategies as a source of innovation in fashion marketing; and to understand how organizations draw upon co-branding to inform the development of new products, services and brands. Branding strategies, new product development, design, innovation, and fashion marketing are discussed and critically analyzed.

Cardall and Howell discuss design in a particular context of the Dutch design week:
Trends in design manifest in many ways. To identify meta-trends in contemporary design culture, we worked with nine student researchers to gather data seen during an academic trip to Dutch Design Week in 2017. The results indicated growing interest in four central themes: identity, globalization, technology, and production. From these themes, nine trends were outlined; social engagement, production consciousness, design for agency, material innovation, humanist design, humanity and technology, re-interrogating history, speculative design, and questioning the role of design practice itself. We noted a shift from narrative-driven to experiential designed objects and a change from individual expression toward communal experience. We also observed a discipline in flux as designers struggle with these large themes, object hood, and the role of the designer.

Discussion

The contribution demonstrate a wide variety of what design discourses on value creation offers today. Design is not isolated to particular people, but is cooperative and takes place within complex contexts of private and public spheres. It is also connected with business elements such as branding and the issue of design may serve as co-branding.

One critical issue concerns how we may measure the value of design. This is not a major issue in the value of design discourse yet. However, it is likely to become one in the future. However, there a several challenges to this. One is that designers and similar experts are doers more than analyzers and those who analyze like sociologists, marketing people and economists have severe challenges understanding and delimiting design in particular contexts.

A suggestion may rest on the following principles: Standard measurements in economics, sociology and marketing are quantitative and builds on aggregate data, referring to a population, a market, and a segment or similar. When referring to persons or individuals the reference is an average individual and there is usually no way to consider individual variation. The individual variation may be substantial, as our experiment below will show.

In design, we may want to measure values, experiences, expectations, adherence and preferences
It may be is based on a bipolar scale. Such a scale represents data collection in practical situations, like a person using her computer or smartphone to search information, a shopping experience where the person is located in a shop (or particular section of a shop) comparing a pair of items. These represent the comparisons by moving the cursor between the two items indicting which is preferred and even how much one preferred compared to the other. The scale has no number and each particular comparison is representing the values of the particular situation. The researcher may later use a numeric measure to indicate the numbers. Such a measure may become qualitative, but using statistical methods. It will take embodiments into serious consideration.

Further developments will take place and published in the near future.
References


