A Seat at the Table of Social Change through Service Design

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Services and access to them are related to core societal concerns such as sustainability and the role of families and communities in people's lives, themes of enduring concern to the discipline of anthropology. Our aim in this paper is to begin to outline arguments for why anthropology and the EPIC community more broadly should have a prominent seat at the table of understanding and engaging social change emanating from innovations in the service economy. The discourse on services advises that we are in the middle of a major transformation akin to the move from agriculture to manufacturing, where modern economies are becoming service economies and people's relations to material possessions are being reconfigured through services. We suggest that if a major shift is underway in how people get on in the world then it is incumbent upon the EPIC community to consider the opportunities and limitations for shaping this transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The literature on services stresses how service economies are less focused on the production of material goods, a characteristic of industrial societies, and more focused on transformations of state, for example, from dirty to clean (cleaning services), from ignorant to informed (educational services), from sick to healthy (healthcare services). Most definitions of services distinguish them from goods, mentioning their intangibility and their inability to be possessed, stored, or transported (George & Berry, 1981; Lovelock, 1996; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). It is noted that services only exist at the time of their consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), when skill and expertise are applied to achieve a transformation or produce some outcome. In this way services are co-produced through interactions between providers of the service and those who "consume" or receive it. And equally important, the value of the service is dependent on particular relationships between service providers and consumers (Gutek, 1995). Clearly an economy increasingly fueled by services with these characteristics is changing the sociomaterial conditions in which we live. Services are world-making in that their success requires people who recognize and value the transformations brought about by a changing and expanding collection of services.

The dramatic expansion in the scope and complexity of services makes it appropriate to speak of "service worlds" (Bryson et al., 2004) where services are integrated into the fabric of contemporary life and in the process transform it – for example, when the things that used to be done in and by families and communities become commodified and are offered as services. Furthermore services provide an important portal through which assumptions about expertise and intentionality flow into previously "untouched" arenas of social life – for example, when ordinary people become taxi drivers or homeowners become hoteliers

2015 Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference Proceedings, pp. 290–305, ISSN 1559–8918.

offering rooms in their homes for a price. Because contemporary service worlds include more than services, an engaged scholarship on services and their design must include a critical assessment of how services are conceptualized and designed.

In recent years there have been interdisciplinary efforts to create a "science of services" grounded primarily in the disciplines of business marketing and engineering that seeks to discover generalizable knowledge about services in order ultimately to better control and design them. The danger, of course, is that such a science may replicate assumptions of the professional fields and disciplines that are themselves firmly grounded in specific ways of knowing and societal conventions. Accompanying the development of service science has been the extension of the discourses of design to include services where it is claimed services can be designed and implemented from plans that reflect human intentions. Although it has been argued that designing is a basic human capability (Kingery, 2001), design also has become institutionalized and popularized as a field of specialized expertise. As social scientists interested in understanding the human condition and contributing to the design of services that contribute to human betterment, these new developments in both service science and service design are of interest and provide arenas where the unique perspectives of anthropology can make significant contributions (Blomberg & Darrah, 2015).

To explore these possibilities we have organized the paper in three sections. The first examines changes that are taking place in the service landscape and raises the question of what kind of social change we imagine is shaped by services and the worlds that attend them. The second section considers two notable responses to the expansion of services – attempts to create a science of services and efforts to develop a professional practice of service design. In the third section we explore some of the ways the EPIC community might respond to the world-making opportunities services offer.

CHANGING SERVICE LANDSCAPE[1]

We often think of the service sector as providing low-end work in food service or janitorial services, but for years services have also included high-end jobs such as in law and medicine. Even a casual look at services shows their sheer diversity. They included the hands-on services of janitors, teachers, doctors and chefs; the technology-mediated services of automated bank teller machines, self-service checkout lanes, and online travel reservations; and the business-to-business services of IT outsourcing, package delivery, and insurance claims processing. There are differing views on the impact of the service economy on work, some are rather optimistic, focusing on knowledge-intensive and high-skilled labor (Frenkel et al., 1999) and on the reduced need to own things when they are offered as services (Thackara, 2005), others portrays service sector jobs as primarily menial, gendered, and amenable to offshoring (Rothman, 1998), and still others imagine the end of work where machines and artificial intelligences will replace the need for human labor (Arthur, 2011; Zysman, 2006). In addition, services enabled by digital technology have added to the near ubiquitous access to many services and, coupled with "big data" analytics, hyper-customized services that provide personalized services to match individual characteristics with custom offerings are becoming commonplace. The proliferation of these new kinds of services and service relationships are shaping the service worlds we have come to inhabit. Part of the story then of the recent rise in services involves the emergence of new divisions of labor between humans and machines, some of which are dislocating workers and redefining

human-to-human relations along with the non-human actors involved in delivering the service. We describe a few of the recent changes in the service landscape that are having an impact on communities, families, identities, organizations, and institutions.

Product-Service Systems

Product firms have begun to focus more and more on the services that are enabled through the use of their products. These product-service systems supplement or replace traditional product offerings building on a strategy of bundling services with products. Firms opt to retain ownership of the product, and only sell the service enabled by the product. Companies like Salesforce.com, Intuit, and Adobe provide software as a service (SaaS) where software applications are hosted by service providers and made available to customers over the Internet. So instead of buying software packages and/or licenses and installing them on proprietary hardware, firms are paying for the capabilities the software provides in increments that match their consumption needs. Firms have been moving toward this "servitization" of products model for a number of reasons, but importantly they realize there is more profit to be made from selling services than products. This trend has meant that people and organizations no longer need to own the products to receive their benefits and this in turn has a potentially profound affect on economic, policy, and tax systems that privilege capital over labor.

Peer-to-peer

Services once marketed by businesses are now being made available through technology-enabled networks of people. These peer-to-peer services bypass traditional service providers and enable people to procure services directly from their peers. The emblematic example is Airbnb that allows individuals to offer spare rooms in their homes by positioning rooms as "under-utilized assets" that become part of a network of "hotel rooms" where guests search, select, negotiate, pay for, and review the service. Information technology makes finding and managing these resources a whole lot easier and in some cases possible at all.

Early on these peer-to-peer models of service were lauded as contributing to the creation of a "sharing economy" where people could more easily share their material possessions, sometimes for a fee, thus reducing the need for manufactured goods. Thackara (2005: 7) opined that, "For more or less anything heavy and fixed, we don't have to own them—just know how and where to find them." Furthermore it was argued that people could share their skills in meal preparation or graphic design through online marketplaces like Task Rabbit or eLance or through collaborative exchange networks. And in recent years time banking (Seyfang, 2004; 2006) has become a non-monetary mechanism for service exchange where people invest their time by providing services to others for which they have expertise with the expectation that they will be able to call upon others to provide services to them (Carroll, 2013). Time banking connects to a long history of neighbors helping neighbors with ICT making it easier to keep track of people's time investments. However, also changing are the informal accounting practices embedded in the stories neighbors formerly told each other as a means of remembering past acts of kindness.

These shifting service landscapes, enabled by technology, are reworking people's relations to one another and to their possessions. For example, long-standing working class

and professional jobs may be threatened by people who dabble, or have few alternatives but to participate in the so-called "gig economy" where people directly provide their services for a fee. These new service models also raise issues about the role of governments in people's lives and in the redistribution of wealth when services once provided by governmental agencies are offered through collaborative exchange networks.

Services and the Internet

Also contributing to the growth in new services has been the arrival of the "Internet of Things" where sensors send and receive information that connect people, places, and things to the Internet and to each other, thereby generating a dramatic increase in the data streams of these interconnections. Every day we learn of new apps that analyze these data to report on, for example, buying habits, blood sugar levels, traffic congestion patterns, voting behaviors, parking space availability, and airline ticket fares. Mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets give anytime access to these services with embedded GPS chips enabling location-aware services. Many digitally enabled services involve "hidden" machine-to-machine interactions that aggregate data from diverse sources, connect frequency data with geospatial displays, route users through task flows, and perform behind the scene calculations. Many of these functions were until recently performed by a skilled human workforce, but efficiencies in cost and improvements in quality and reliability mean that data-driven algorithms are displacing people at an ever growing rate. Reflecting on the growth in these technology enabled services, Arthur (2011:2) worries that a "Second Economy" is emerging where human labor is displaced by machines and, "Business processes that once took place among human beings are now being executed electronically … in an unseen domain that is strictly digital."

In a different way, the Internet also has become increasingly important for the distribution of services, extending the reach of services into new and sometimes unforeseen markets and providing opportunities for a varied set of actors to become involved in economic activities. Older configurations of exclusively public or private concerns are yielding to more complex and idiosyncratic arrangements that bring together non-profits, public funding, foundation funding, exchange or barter, and donations. Notable here are crowd funding firms like Kickstarter and Experiement.com, where people with projects appeal to the public for financial support with expectations of receiving some benefit, although not necessarily monetary, in return.

Services and Social Change

Simply contrasting services or the service economy with goods or manufacturing oversimplifies the complexity and ambiguity of services and the extent to which they are changing the fabric of contemporary life. While services sometimes replace activities that were performed outside an economic sphere, such as when we use a restaurant to cook our meals or an accountant to prepare our taxes, they also exist in bundles that create and support entirely new kinds of activities, often in ways we barely comprehend. We have chosen to use the concept of service worlds (Bryson, et al., 2004) to draw attention to how services contribute to social change and the organization of society. It is difficult to imagine how we can engage contemporary social life for human betterment without understanding

the service worlds that flow into and out of the everyday lives of people. Service worlds have implications for how people relate and interact, what they value or think is part of the good life, and even what it means to be a person. Accordingly, we argue both that services are the loci of considerable social change and, furthermore, that they will continue to alter social arrangements. Regardless of intent, many of these alterations will have the sort of unintended consequences that have long attracted the gaze of anthropologists.

FINDING A SEAT AT THE TABLE

The growth of the service economy and the importance of services in defining how we live and interact with each other have led to efforts to systematize scientific knowledge about services and to professionalize service design. To affect change through service worlds it is critical to have a seat at the table where services are being conceptualized and designed. How services are conceptualized as the objects of design frames the possibilities for involvement in their production and enactment. And yet institutions are emerging that study and design services that are not benefiting from the cross-cultural and perspectival sensibilities of anthropology. Services are changing the social landscape and the voices of ethnographers and anthropologist need to contribute to the discourse on services and the ways we imagine how best to shape service worlds through intentionality and engagement.

A Science of Services

Concepts from engineering and management are being applied to services in an effort to understand and gain more control over the impact services are having on the economy and society (Maglio et al., 2006; Spohrer & Maglio, 2008; 2010). These efforts build on previous research on services in the field marketing (Grönroos, 1984; Gummesson, 1987; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004; Oliver et al., 1997; Teboul, 2006) with the aim of creating a science of services. Motivated in part by an acknowledgement that science proceeds by developing and refining concepts to describe the phenomena of interest, scholars and practitioners have been developing a set of concepts and a vocabulary to systematically inquire about services that is distinct from the language of manufacturing (Saco & Goncalves, 2008). While the scholarship on services continues to evolve rapidly and its nomenclature has not always been consistent, the aim is to allow scholars who approach services from different standpoints to collaborate. While a common language does not by itself resolve disciplinary differences in knowledge claims and know-how, the hope is that systematic, agreed upon approaches to describing services will enable the design of more complex services and ultimately introduce greater predictability into service outcomes.

For our discussion we focus on three overarching concepts used to describe and understand contemporary services: *services*, *service encounters*, and *service systems*. Our interest is to explore the consequences of particular ways of conceptualizing services on how we understand and engage with service worlds.

The concept of services is foundational and without it the notion of a service science makes little sense and yet it can be vexing precisely because it seems so obvious and familiar. The concept is widely used by scholars and ordinary folk alike. While there are numerous scholarly definitions of services, early definitions almost always make reference to how services differ from goods. It is said that services provide intangible benefits that satisfy

identified needs through some form of exchange (Zeithaml, 1981; Rushton & Carson, 1989; Berry, 1995). Also emphasized is the difficulty of separating service production from consumption, noting that services are produced as they are consumed (Zeithaml et al., 1985). An implication is that services cannot be inventoried or stored since they do not exist until they are consumed. Finally definitions stress the difficulty of standardizing services because of the heterogeneity of service recipients who are involved in producing the service. Recently scholars have challenged these as the defining characteristics of services because they are not uniformly applicable to all services and instead have suggested that a more useful and universal distinction between services and goods is that services cannot be owned (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). Services give recipients the right of access to objects and to the labor and expertise of others.

Services are often characterized as being simultaneously produced and consumed which positions the service recipient in an intimate relationship with the production process (Zeithaml et al., 1985). In essence service recipients are viewed as co-producers of the service as they mobilize knowledge and other resources in the service process. In a related way they can also be viewed as the co-creators of value because their actions affect service outcomes and the attending value received by both provider and recipient (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Because services are enacted by people who participate in different institutions and lifestyles, and who thus bring different skills, knowledge, and expectations to the service encounter, co-production and co-creation introduce a significant element of unpredictability into service outcomes and value (Bitner et al., 1997; Grönroos, 2011).

If services are co-productions and co-creations, people must learn how to participate appropriately in service encounters by identifying and ascribing meaning to characteristic elements of the service. Part of being a competent member of society involves learning how to perform in the context of a service exchange. Services viewed as the processes of co-producing outcomes and co-creating value, places tangible goods in a secondary role to the things people do. This observation figures into the notion of a service-dominant logic put forth by Vargo and Lusch (2004) who argue that services, not goods, should be the fundamental unit of exchange. In this sense "things" are valued in use, which suggests that goods too have to be enacted for their value to be realized. Service dominant logic challenged earlier definitions of services that suggested a strong disjuncture between services as intangible and goods as material. These observations are not particularly surprising to anthropologists who have long understood that people have always lived in social worlds that are simultaneously material and immaterial and they have always been entangled with each other in creating things, ideas, and interactions.

A second and foundational concept in the development of a science of service is the service encounter where services are made visible through interactions among people and things (Shostack, 1985; Clatworthy, 2010). It is through encounters between service providers and recipients that services are realized. The concept of service encounter is seemingly simple, but it belies the complexity and variability of encounters. An encounter with a massage therapist, involving bodily contact and ongoing communication about appropriate levels of pain, is notably different from an encounter with a service technician located many time zones away occurring through a chat line. People come to service encounters with expectations they learn by participating in and being part of a social milieu (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). In this sense it is important to acknowledge that society shapes the encounter and defines possibilities for action and interaction that go beyond individual

actors interacting with "the service". This simple observation quickly expands the scope for what is required to understand and describe service encounters into realms that are at the core of concerns of the EPIC community.

Some of the complexities of service interactions are addressed in the concept of a service system where the focus is on specific relations between entities – people, technology, organizations – through which value is created (Spohrer & Maglio, 2010). Service systems may be invisible to the users of a service, but they support service encounters by mustering information, spaces and artifacts, participants, and flows of capital to ensure that the service can provide its essential transformations over time. A hospital providing services to patients, doctors, and staff, for example, could be described as a service system where the activities of a coordinated set of actors (entities) are needed to create value. The connection between such entities as pharmaceutical companies providing medicines, credentialing bodies certifying doctors and nurses, databases storing patients' paper and digital records, hospital beds and other medical equipment, information systems scheduling procedures and visits, and so on are connected in specific ways to deliver value. Deciding what is within the service system and what is outside ultimately depends on the purposes for which the system is being defined. This requires that we reflect on the practices through which some entities become part of the service system and others are omitted, how the elements of a service system are assembled, what training is needed to see them, and whether everyone will define particular service systems in the same way. Accordingly, service science is itself profoundly social and embedded in particular societies, with their divisions of labor, allocations of power, and assumptions and values regarding everyday life.

Service Design

Design has become the lingua franca shared by those who want to speed innovation (Ostrom et al., 2010) and bring about social change. In a recent report of the European Commission on Design for Innovation (2014:5) the authors point to "the transformative power of service design which is understood as the process through which services disrupt traditional channels to market, business processes and models, to significantly enhance customer experience in a way that impacts upon the value chain as a whole." Prompted by the rise in the service economy and the view that design is the route to innovation, service design exploded on the agenda of many organizations where "a multitude of tools, many from the social sciences, [were assembled]… to bear on problems, all under the banner of design as an organizing principle and leitmotif" (Saco & Goncalves, 2008: 10-11). Service design was championed as facilitating the integration of expertise from different disciplines, including interaction design, marketing, and technology development (Dubberly & Evenson, 2010; Kimbell, 2009; 2011; Ostrom et al., 2010; Polaine et al., 2013; Strickdorn & Schneider, 2010). The language of design seemed to bind together the activities of diverse fields and disciplines whose members were engaged in the common endeavor of bringing about services.

The unified language of design combined with the sheer variety of activities that fall under this rubric has led to a proliferation of service design techniques, but many fit within a set of recognizable design steps borrowed from product design. One such example is Dubberly and Evenson (2010) elegant sequence of activities that begins with the step of observation involving a description of the environment and "user and stakeholder needs

identification". The next step, reflection, includes describing the current service system and the imagined one using techniques of blueprinting and customer journey maps. Following-on is the making step where the particular features or "resources" are designed, including the processes, enactments and "experience strategy". The next step of socializing creates "the network for uptake" – both within the service organization and with the customers. Finally, implementation occurs when system resources are "brought to life" through beta tests and fine-tuning over time. By engaging in these steps designers explore possibilities, generate alternatives, and evaluate outcomes – the long established routines of design. However, accepting these as canonical steps of service design does not directly specify what activities service designers will be engaged in as these depend on factors such as where the designers are situated in relation to the design project and the skills and know-how at their disposal, both theirs and others, including lay people.

A central puzzle for service designer is what is their object. Some have suggested the outcomes or transformations brought about the by application of human or mechanical effort might be viewed as the object of service design (Kimbell, 2011). Alternatively, the performances of providers and recipients as they enact services could represent a reasonable object of service design (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011). Others contend that the "touch points" or the times when service providers and recipients interact, either directly or mediated by technology, to "produce" or "co-create" service offer a possible foci for design (Clatworthy, 2010). Designing for outcomes – the transformations that designers would like to achieve – suggests a strategy of working backwards from outcomes to consider the various levers or resources available to help realize outcomes. Service design's object might then be to design the conditions or prerequisites required to make service transformations possible (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011:23-24). In this sense service design shares characteristics with interaction and experience design where there is a concern with the sociotechnical affordances that enable interactions and define experiences (Holmlid, 2007; Patrício et al., 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). This is similar to Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011:10) who argue for a focus on designing "the right conditions for certain forms of interactions and relationships to happen." In this sense service design rests upon theories of human behavior, how people will be inclined to act, and the practices and know-how that condition what is reasonable or even possible.

Reflecting on the current state of design, Thackara (2005:7) observes, "… designers are having to evolve from being the individual authors of objects, or buildings, to being the facilitators of change among large groups of people." Without presupposing that designers can control how people interact with each other or their surroundings, the design challenge is to create certain conditions that will make some interactions and encounters more likely than others and at the same time reducing the gap between what the designer imagines will be the outcomes of design and the world as experienced, given all the intermediaries and historical antecedents that shape futures.

Broadening the scope of service design in this way complicates and to some extent unreasonably expands the designer's role beyond areas in which she may be comfortable or feel empowered. Furthermore, the expectation that any one designer or design project will be able to address in any meaningful way the myriad of potential influences on service outcomes is likely unreasonable. That said, service design effectively requires that designers connect to different kinds of knowledge and know-how at different times and with varying degrees of attainment. The multiple and varied sites for service design offer many potential

opportunities to shape outcomes, each requiring different sets of skills and implicating the designer and design project in particular accountabilities to actors and outcomes.

What does service science and service design offer?

Service science concepts are expressions of the worldview of a community of practice. They do not just describe and analyze services, but they simultaneously define the world as a particular place with attendant opportunities and constraints on our ability to intervene. The scholarly discourse about services defines services as an analytically distinct phenomenon of interest and service science as a distinct field of scholarship. But by abstracting services and by developing a specialized vocabulary to describe them, scholars are framing questions that in the end can only be answered by exploring the social contexts within which services make sense. For example, service encounters are located within frames that members of a society understand and value and they implicate "matters of concern" (Latour, 2004; 2005) and the practical ways through which knowledge is produced through everyday activities. In this way as Hanser (2008) argues in her ethnographic account of retail service in a Chinese department store, service encounters play an important role in forming and reproducing social hierarchies. Similarly the discourse of service systems can give a false sense of unity, inhibiting critical reflection on the ways the system as defined may silence some voices. And by emphasizing the ability to engineer service systems to be efficient and effective as systems, entities that fall outside the boundaries of the system may be overlooked with unrecognized consequences.

Distinct starting and stopping points that often characterize the design process are typically lacking in service design. The various elements from which services are built have histories and as such are less de novo productions than modifications to on-going flows of activity. As such the designer writ large is better understood as intervening in interactions and exchanges that are both enduring and partial. Designers also participate in service worlds where they learn to see problems and opportunities – and construct services as their solution. They do not just discover services in the world that are then described and analyzed, much like a natural historian. Designers participate in communities of practice with their own conventions that are consequential to their ability to intervene in service worlds. Likewise, what is designed – a set of symbols, rules, specifications, models – will be enacted through similar social processes.

Regardless of whether we are describing a service, teasing apart the "props" of encounters, or navigating around the complex terrain of systems, we soon find ourselves looking at the practices of people participating in service worlds and of those who venture to describe and intervene in them. We are effectively resituating services within a larger sociocultural context and this is a place where the social sciences, and anthropology in particular, have long dwelled.

THE EPICurians ARE COMING, THE EPICurians ARE COMING!

If social change is being driven by services, then what are the opportunities to participate in defining service worlds? With tongue barely in cheek, we issue a call to EPICurian arms framed in terms of challenges that service worlds present to society, to anthropology, and to EPICurians. We believe we must expand the concept of service beyond its grounding in

post-industrial Western societies. Failing to do so leaves us with an impoverished conceptualization of services and one that runs the risk of exporting inappropriate or unwelcome service models that discount the experiences of other societies and move our own in unwelcome directions. There is rich variety of services found around the world even though they are not expressed in the nomenclature of service encounters, systems, or science. EPICurians are well suited to see continuity and disjuncture between contemporary services and those evident in the ethnographic record. While service worlds are often starkly contrasted with industrial age of manufactured goods and are presented as a transformation that is sweeping away all that came before, services have always characterized societies although their forms have differed historically and across societies. The service world of the Trobriand Islanders, for example, would be described as one in which ceremony, ritual and cosmology contributed significantly to the necessity and value of services. Concepts like efficiency, productivity and return on investment would fail to capture important characteristics of the services rendered. Instead, the Trobriand Islanders would be seen as having created multiple spheres of exchange, each following their own logic with no single over-arching calculus of value, with the realization that some exchanges were incommensurate. Likewise, we would see that their services were not designed per se but emerged over time and became foundational to the survival of the Islanders as people with a distinct identity that was at the same time fuzzy at the edges where they collided and conspired with people from other societies (Blomberg & Darrah, 2015).

Seeing contemporary service worlds as a disjunction, a significant break in how societies and everyday lives are organized, while also reflecting on the deeper continuity of services that connect people through time is one of the well known tricks of anthropology – for example, making familiar services exotic and the seemingly exotic practices of other societies familiar. We suggest revisiting anthropology's record of cross-cultural studies to provide a critical reflection on knowledge claims about services that are based solely on the experiences of post-industrial, western societies. Presenting an expanded database salient to services must also be accompanied by discussion of how to link it to actions that are responsive to challenges faced today in bringing about more just and sustainable service worlds. It is not enough that the rich ethnographic record is greeted with interest. We must insure that it is an essential resource for those engaging in bringing about social change through service design. Even though EPICurians are relative newcomers to service science and design, we must find ways to communicate the distinct and significant value we have to offer as a reflective practice that is attentive to representing multiple perspectives and that acknowledges that consensus of purpose or motive is not required and rarely possible. Our value goes beyond arguing for the distinctiveness of ethnographic methods and analysis for service design by providing perspectives on how services integrate interactions, materiality, ideology and values while problematizing the way services are conceptualized, designed, developed, and enacted.

Additionally, EPICurians have an opportunity to challenge the view that services simply enact value propositions that allow for their commercialization and commodification. Instead services should be understood as enacting societal values and as such can be the site for promoting social good and not just for responding to individual desires. While not suggesting that contemporary service worlds are necessarily dystopian, there is a need for more critical reflection on the ways services are potentially damaging relationships and commodifying interactions that were once offered through generalized or balanced

reciprocity. While it would be naive to think that business value propositions will or even should disappear, more attention on broader social values will allow service design to become a way of enabling communities to realize their defining aspirations. In this sense, the opportunity for service design should not simply be to commercialize the service, but to enlist services in creating new forms of sociability and sustainability.

Finally there is an opportunity for EPICurians to democratize service design by cultivating the skills and knowledge to bring about new services and service relationships more broadly. We want to avoid the pitfall of assuming that service science and design provide the necessary basis for generating services, which renders serve design beyond the reach of those lacking expert knowledge. Instead, we suggest attention to varied perspectives and shifting the locus of action from grand design by experts to interventions into the mélange of activities, interactions, and artifacts that comprise a service. Rather than demanding a single, consensual definition of the proposed service, it is important to recognize that living within service worlds gives a wide range of actors access to the means of teasing apart the variety of practices that may be salient to creating services. Where there is a lack of access to costly expertise these local, community based interventions may garner widespread use. Above all, they may demystify the production of services by making social change through intervention in service worlds everyone's prevue.

Services and service worlds also pose a set of challenges for the discipline of anthropology that is captured by the idea of an anthropology of services (Blomberg & Darrah, 2015). Although the study of services is a multidisciplinary endeavor, even a cursory review of the literature reveals the dominance of business, marketing, and engineering perspectives and the relative paucity of social scientific, especially anthropological ones. Treating services and service worlds as legitimate subjects for anthropological, specifically ethnographic, inquiry is essential to the future of the discipline. We need a larger agenda of looking at the place of services in society and participating in imagining, defining, and engaging with new services. Services change everyday lives, often in ways that are difficult to fully appreciate while they unfold. An anthropology of services draws attention to the intended and unintended consequences of the shift to services on individuals and collectivities. If anthropology is to meet its intellectual goals and the EPIC community its pragmatic aspirations, then the rise of services, especially as designed human activity systems, requires that we take seriously the place of services in society.

The anthropological study of services is immediately relevant to wider audiences with whom collaboration will be essential. Our call to EPICurians contrasts with earlier calls to the discipline, such as the Boas invective to document the vanishing ways of life of indigenous peoples. Anthropologists may have been among the few scholars interested in vanishing ways of life, but they are not alone when it comes to an interest in services. In fact, they are recent arrivals to the dinner party, with scholars and practitioners from numerous disciplines and fields already seated at the table. However, far from being ignored, anthropologists are finding themselves with audiences that are knowledgeable about the discipline, if somewhat misguided in equating anthropology with ethnographic methods. While anthropologists are committed to documentation and analysis, their fellow guests are using the findings, concepts, and analyses of ethnography for their own purposes. This may annoy and frustrate and even drive some to leave the party early, but abandoning the service arena is not a viable option since it effectively cedes a significant domain of human activity to other disciplines. Furthermore, engaging with scholars and practitioners from other fields,

who have different expertise and even purposes, can make our analyses more robust and increase the likelihood that our efforts will have an impact on the world.

Regardless of whether service worlds seem familiar and mundane or exotic and exciting, ethnography is a methodology that is well-suited for tracing connections, giving voice to diverse perspectives, embracing ambiguity, and probing claims of grand consensual visions. Services and service worlds place a premium on holism as a foundational principle that enables the exploration of how services become embedded in people's lives and also on identifying loci for intervening. Interventions into service worlds are likely to occur over extended periods, with shifts here and there leading to notable transformations over time. This means that the assumption that services presume intentions and precede implementation is better replaced with the view that actions are followed by reflections that lead to further actions in a more emergent and iterative way. And this fundamentally alters how best to think about designing for services since it necessarily involves relationships that must be maintained over time. There is a need for broader sets of skills that morph as services becomes embedded in and alter service worlds.

Services require interpretive work performed by those who study, design, and engage with them. Even when participants are not aware of their contributions, they define how intentions and desires are translated into information, interactions, and transactions. Studying services involves understanding how some voices become privileged (or not) and how power to mobilize resources and address unintended consequences are differentially distributed. And it entails exploring networks and entities that are mobilized around a service, recognizing how they work for different constituencies. Taken together new skills are needed to support an extended involvement with those engaged in transforming service worlds. New practices that draw upon the recognized roles for anthropologists as brokers and translators are needed. Familiar anthropological skills and knowledge may be plied intermittently over time with other attributes less associated with anthropology required in order to remain engaged in bringing about social change. An anthropology of services ultimately must address the fact that service worlds include much more than services. They include modes of production, institutional arrangements, and diverse and complex belief systems. This means that a larger agenda is needed that looks at the place of services in society as part of what it means to design new services.

EPICurians should be helping draw attention to the consequences, intended or unintended, of a shift to services and its consequences for identity, divisions of labor, institutional processes, and patterns of consumption. We need to look at the distribution of services in society, as well as the implications for individuals of service worlds and the skills they imply. And we need to do so in ways where analysis and critique are prelude to action and not paralysis. We can contribute to developing services directly by both drawing upon the ethnographic record and by conducting new research either on the problem situation per se or on other social settings that may provide lessons relevant to our interests. But we can also contribute to a more reflective approach in which our actions as service scientists, designers, maintainers, providers, and users are incorporated into our practices. The challenge here is to not just sell our skills and ourselves to the highest bidder, but to see opportunities to develop new services that address individual and societal desires.

Much of what we have discussed throughout this paper is intended to make the case that services and service worlds provide terrain that is amenable to the anthropological gaze. Ethnography can enrich appreciation for the complexity of services and their embeddedness

in wider social processes. But we cannot simply sit on the sidelines and offer up critique. We must become directly engaged in service worlds in order to transform them and this at times involves taking risks that our design intentions will not be realized in practice. There is a necessity for being fully engaged in "producing" services and not just sitting on the sidelines as commentators. This can be a challenge for the many anthropologists who see the discipline as above and apart from the messiness, ethical and otherwise, of explicitly attempting to support changes in everyday life with implications for the broader society. Our starting point may be ethnography and a broadly anthropological approach to understanding service worlds, but our goal is to support practices that contribute to human betterment and doing so requires the willingness of anthropologists to plunge in and accept having a stake in defining services, knowing that there will be consequences, intended and otherwise. Simply being engaged in service worlds does not place us on the side of angels, for services are incredibly diverse and the values and transformations they hope to achieve are divergent and sometimes contradictory. It means putting "things" in the world that people will engage with and being ready for feedback that may shock or dismay. Regardless, it will affect the discipline of anthropology and how we practice it.

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NOTES

1. The next two sections are based largely on Blomberg & Darrah, 2015.

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