

Self-assessment by Catalina Alzate

SUBMITTED ON 05 OCT 2022



A summary about me:

I am a Colombian designer specialised in community-driven processes for designing technology-enabled services. My service design practice combines design theory and methods with social justice and activism, in areas such as gender equality, healthcare and internet policy. I have published a book chapter and papers on the value of participatory approaches to design and the need for creative practitioners to reflect on their practice to gear it towards social change. My first service design project won an award in social responsibility in Colombia and was featured in an iconic book about Service Design in the country. Since then I've been practicing Service Design with underserved communities and through design pedagogy. My most recent engagement has been as a Service Design Instructor for the Master in Design and Health at UT Austin.

I currently work as a/at:

Assistant Professor of Practice, School of Design and Creative Technologies, UT Austin.

Link : <https://designcreativetech.utexas.edu/catalina-alzate>

My LinkedIn profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/catalina-alzate-b153a951/>

My educational background:

1. Bachelors in Design from La Universidad de Los Andes in Bogota, Colombia (emphasis in Service and Strategic Design)
2. MFA in Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication from The University of Texas at Dallas.

The following theories are the key components of my approach to service design:

Feminist theory is crucial to my work as it provides a lens to understand gender dynamics, but also tools for framing design interventions in mutually-beneficial ways with participants. Complexity theory has been relevant for understanding systems and therefore service ecosystems. Emergence theory has been important for aligning service design with social change and contemporary issues.

These are the most relevant resources I base my work on and I recommend them as a body of knowledge in service design:

Books:

1. 'Good Services. How to design good services that work' by Lou Downe: This is a practical guide for identifying core components of services and designing good experiences. I use this resource because it does not pretend to have formulas for actual innovation but it stays at the level of usage. Services that work, not necessarily services that revolutionize an industry. This humble and realistic approach is always useful to use with



workshop participants or team members.

2. 'Designing the invisible, an introduction to Service Design' by Lara Penin: I use some sections of this book to study key concepts. The most interesting and useful section is titled 'The politics of Service Design' which touches on emotional labor, sustainability and organizational politics.

3. 'Designing culture' by Anne Balsamo. This book is a pioneer in the field of Design in general. It provides a perspective on design from a feminist standpoint and a critical lens on technology.

4. 'Beyond Sticky Notes: Co-Design for Real: Mindsets, Methods and movements' by Kelly Ann McKercher. This book explores the process of co-creation and provides multiple and useful tools and tips for co-creating with different stakeholders.

Other Publications:

The three publications below engage with social systems, and I have drawn parallels between such theories and the practice of Service Design.

1. 'Collaborative services | Social innovation and design for sustainability' Edited by François Jégou and Ezio Manzini

2. 'Relationship-centered Care: A Constructive Reframing' by Mary Catherine Beach, Thomas Inui, and the Relationship-Centered Care Research Network

3. 'Non-Linear Approaches to Service Design' by Suneet Kumar. Touchpoint vol 12 no 2 | april 2021 | 'Service Design and Systems Thinking'

I have X years of working experience in service design:

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My working experience in service design includes involvement in:

- Service design projects
- Service design consultancy
- Service design training

I have particular experience in the following service sectors:

Healthcare, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Gender, Microfinance.

I have conducted X service design projects that aim at creating improvements or innovations within organisations:

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These are the service design projects I have successfully delivered:

1. 'Pa'lante' is a collaborative service among street vendors in Bogota to save money together. The project is a collaboration among local governments and informal saving groups. Published in Alvarez, Natalia Lucía Agudelo. Diseño de Servicios: Casos Universidad de Los Andes. Universidad de los Andes, 2015.

This project is also cited in de los Reyes, David, and Andrea Botero. "Endearing (re) encounters: participatory design in a Latin-American popular context." Proceedings of the 12th Participatory Design Conference: Exploratory Papers, Workshop Descriptions, Industry Cases-Volume 2. 2012.

2. 'VDK Sell of Kilometers' was a consultancy project for a tire dealer company that was looking to innovate the business from product-centric (tires) to service-centric (time that the tires were used). Due to our agreement, there is no public documentation of this consultancy project.

3. Aflore is a service for financial inclusion through tech-enabled community banking. I was the service designer in the team at Polymath Ventures where the company emerged.

<https://polymathv.com/ventures/aflore>



4. Autolab is an auto repair and parts platform in Bogota, Colombia. I was the service designer in the team at Polymath Ventures where the company emerged.

<https://polymathv.com/ventures/autolab>

5. Community-Driven Healthcare is a service enabled by a digital diet chart used by health counselors in Rural India. I was the Project Co-Lead working in collaboration with Maya Health in the town of Channapatna, India.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/124943/maya-health-initiative/>

I have provided service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences for X years:

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My philosophy as a trainer is:

After conducting service design training over the years, I have realized that design tools are not only useful because of the insights they can provide through visualizations, but they are, more importantly, conversation tools. I used to have a deck of tools that participants could use, and they were mostly concerned with filling those up. I saw that there was not much value in following a template, but rather in shaping discussions that create new knowledge. This changed my approach to presenting design tools and pedagogies, where I can allow teams to choose the most useful tools for them and make active decisions in their own creative process.

Another crucial aspect of my training is the inclusion of social change as fundamental for service design. This manifests in many ways: From exercises of positionality to holding discussions on Theories of Change, Sustainability, Labor and politics, complementing with readings etc. I insist on the fact that services and design are not neutral and that we must acknowledge the agenda behind every service or project.

These are the service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences I've facilitated within the last year:

Within the last year, I taught a course called "Service Design" for the Master's students in the Design and Health program at UT Austin. Students were medical trainees at the Dell Medical School of UT Austin. The duration of this course was from November 2021 to December 2021 and included 20 participants. I am currently facilitating this course again in Fall 2022.

I mostly provide my training offerings in the following language(s):

English and Spanish

I mostly provide my training offerings in the following countries/cities:

Colombia, India, United States

I cover the following topics during my training offerings:

- History of service design
- Definition of service design
- Differentiation of service design to other approaches like design thinking, service marketing and service branding
- Service dominant logic
- User research/deep customer insights
- Designing and conducting co-creation workshops
- Creativity and ideation processes
- Visualisation techniques
- Prototyping of services
- Implementation of service design concepts
- Business model development
- Measuring impact of service design, relating it to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Working with complex service systems
- Exploration of systems
- Service design for cultural change



- Service Design and Social Justice

My training participants typically have the following level of experience:

- Novice (new to service design)
- Fundamental (basic knowledge)

These are the service design methods and tools that I use during my sessions:

Theory of change, relationship mapping, storyboards, journey maps, concept development tools, co-creation workshops, group enactment, scenario building, and fast prototyping. For service implementation, I use the Business Model Canvas, Blueprints, and Value Proposition map.

After successfully attending my training sessions, participants will typically be able to:

- Define what services are, their main components, and their relations to other systems.
- Visualize the complexity of systems using various design tools.
- Understand the links between design and social justice, and make responsible decisions.
- Research and co-create service interventions with participants or service clients.
- Ideate multiple ways of prototyping services and experiences.
- Work on implementation tools to launch services to market.

I apply the following evaluation tools to make sure the participants have understood the content of my sessions and gained the expected competencies and skills:

Portfolio review, Written rationales about design decisions, Presentation of final services.

I systematically evaluate and improve my offerings based on feedback. These are examples of feedback that have led to improvements:

- Sometimes participants are confused about deadlines, especially when there are multiple projects in tandem. This has led me to create clear timelines where everyone's projects are working in parallel.
- Participants in my training sessions value the fact that I stress the importance of understanding the inner workings of services. All the orchestrated processes, people and resources needed for services to function. This realistic approach to services also reinforces the need for multidisciplinary teams.

I have published the following books/articles on service design and related fields:

- Alzate, Catalina. "The method of Enactment and the framework of Design: Interdisciplinary contributions to Participatory Research". The SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research and Enquiry, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2021
- Alzate, Catalina. "The Underlying Paths of Participation." Proceedings of the 16th Participatory Design Conference 2020 - Participation(s) Otherwise - Volume 2, 2020, doi:10.1145/3384772.3385170.
- Alzate, Catalina. "Participation, Creativity and Design in Research Methodology around ICTs." GenderIT.org, 16 Feb. 2018, web access.
- Alzate, Catalina, et al. "Bio-Creation of Informatics: Rethinking Data Ecosystems in the Network Economy." Proceedings of the 23rd International Symposium on Electronic Arts, pp. 603–604.

Contact details:

Catalina Alzate
3016 Guadalupe St., 78705 Austin
alzate.catalina@gmail.com