From the lectures...

In Topic 2, "Principles and Theories of Design," I learned that design is multi-dimensional, blending structure with creativity. I could see that design doesn’t follow just one path; instead, it needs to be flexible, spanning across many levels to meet various requirements. Furthermore, different design approaches suit different contexts. For example, a rational design approach with a structured, linear waterfall model is ideal when the requirements are stable and well-defined. But for more ambiguous projects, action-centered, iterative methods like agile, which allow developers to test, optimize, and adapt products based on feedback are better choices.

Some design challenges are “wicked problems”— messy, complex, and often pull developers in conflicting directions. These have shown me that the best solutions come from creative thinking and balancing competing needs. Also, the "double diamond" model emphasizes divergence and convergence, which taught me to explore different opportunities before opting for the best solutions.

In topic 3, "Principles and Theories of Service Design," I learned that service design should be holistic and human centered. It focuses not only on what users see and experience (frontstage) but also on the behind-the-scenes operations (backstage) that make it all work. Effective service design is about elevating both new and existing services, ensuring each touchpoint—each interaction—enhances user experience. These tangible elements, or "evidence," make a service feel cohesive and reliable to the end user.

We also took a look back at the "double diamond" model, with its structured progression from discovery to delivery. There is also Stickdorn’s adaptation, which adds iterative feedback loops that go deeper into understanding users and refining solutions. Birgit Mager’s insights on mapping user journeys show how organizing services into frontstage and backstage elements supports seamless functionality between user experience and the operations that enable it.

...to the Tutorials

In the 1st tutorial, we learned how to distinguish between products, services, and service-product hybrids. The exercise highlighted the concept of "servitization," showing how products can be transformed into service-oriented offerings to enhance user engagement and align with sustainability goals. As a group, we got the Albéa’s recyclable toothpaste tubes, which we identified as a product with potential servitization through sustainability consulting, reflecting an emphasis on “care” as the primary service offering.

The 2nd tutorial was a service safari. We got to examine the Lahti's city bikes Mankeli. By using the service as customers, we discovered the value proposition of the service—"Green and flexible mobility within Lahti's urban core"— as well as what were good and bad about it.

For the 3rd tutorial, we came back to Mankeli to examine how various actors contribute to the shared value in a service system. We mapped out the service and its users as central co-creators, supported by entities like banks, the City of Lahti, manufacturers, and technicians. The main interaction spaces identified included the physical bike stations and the mobile app. This mapping exercise provided insights into service-dominant (S-D) logic and how value emerges through interactions among many actors.

The 4th tutorial was very interesting as we engaged in drawing 100 lines of different shapes and names. Reflecting on this, I noted that the exercise wasn’t merely about line creation but served as a practical lesson on the evolving nature of design and problem-solving.

In the 5th tutorial, the group explored collaboration and non-verbal communication in design through a structured game using Legos. This exercise highlighted the challenges of working with unclear goals and the importance of mutual understanding in collaboration. Key takeaways included the importance of clear communication and the value of well-defined project goals and constraints from the beginning.

For the 6th tutorial, we had to brainstorm an idea for Finnair. I was absent so I did it on my own. The idea was an in-flight snack bar where passengers could customize snacks using the in-flight entertainment system or mobile app. This exercise demonstrated the value of divergent and convergent thinking in service design, highlighting the impact of iterative ideation and quick decision-making in refining innovative service concepts.

My personal thoughts

Reflecting on the whole course, I've found the content and information provided are not really applicable to my professional career and goals. I was working as a full-stack engineer, and recently ventured into the role of systems designer/solution architect

The master's degree in Digital Systems and Service Development is considered a continuation of my bachelor's degree in Software and Systems Engineering from LUT, and one must have previous education in a software-related field to be admitted. Therefore, I expected more emphasis on systems engineering, software architecture, or even technical service delivery. Instead, this course felt much closer to training for UI/UX or product design roles. Many of the methods introduced in the course felt somewhat removed from the technical focus of my field, where the primary concerns are system reliability, scalability, and integration rather than front-facing features. This made me wonder how service design methods could provide value in technical fields—if at all.

The tutorials, while interactive and engaging, didn’t contribute much to my learning or career growth. They felt more like breaks from the usual academic routine of essays, reports, and quizzes, than another step toward mastering skills relevant to my path as a software engineer. I felt like I was back in my Erasmus exchange, taking business and marketing courses.

I understand that a lot of students in this course didn't come from a technical background in IT/software like me. However, given that LUT is an engineering university, and this is a technical degree, there should be ways to incorporate more software-related topics into service design to make it relevant for those of us aiming for technical careers. The course should be more like Service Design "in the context of Software Development".

AI Declaration

ChatGPT was used to rewrite some parts of this document because I'm not very good at non-technical writing (i.e. reflection or learning diary).