ABSTRACT

In this doctoral dissertation, I explore how the work and occupations of creatives are changing in today’s society. In specific I discuss the emergence of Service Design as an occupation, and the challenges it brings along for designers to work in a new and rapidly changing work domain. Based on an ethnography at Service Design firm Fjord, I present two studies. In the first study, I show that the work of designers is shifting from designing digital products to transforming organizations, partly as a consequence of the acquisition by management consultancy Accenture. In this renewed situation, it is difficult for designers to practice their craft and train their design skills. In order to maintain a sense of craftsmanship and feel connected to their work, designers put effort in for example developing detailed drawings and playful prototypes. In this study, I show that it can be difficult for people to change their material practices at work despite pressures for change. In the second study, I address the changing membership within the occupation Service Design. Especially since the acquisition, the organization attracted more designers with a background in business. These designers have different conceptions of what it means to work as a Service Designer. As a consequence, discussions emerge between the longer serving designers with a background in design disciplines and those with a background in business. In this study, I map these discussions and demonstrate that there can be unclarity around ‘how work ought to be done’ in new occupations. Next to Fjord, I also did a qualitative case study at social innovation hub Waag Society. Here I explore how creatives help business professionals to kickstart innovation trajectories in collaborative projects. I suggest that creatives help their clients orient at alternative realities through facilitating liminality. Liminality here refers to a transformation process which helps people transit to new organizational realities, through moving people out of their comfort zone and teaching them novel ways of thinking and behaving. In sum, these three studies have theoretical and practical implications for better understanding the daily work of creatives, the emergence of creative occupations and collaborations between businesses and the creative industry.