Podcast series: Leading for Interdisciplinary Creativity

IDBM programme at AAalto University

Episode 1

Length: 48.45 min

Guests: Laura Lerkkanen and Adithya Varadarajan

Host: Irina Viippola

Laura: [00:00:00] I kind of see that all different carriers are more and more requiring this type of multidisciplinary collaboration and facilitation skills, and rather than deep expertise in, in one kind of single area

AAalto University podcast.

Irina: this is leading for interdisciplinary creativity and I am your host. Irina Viippola. In this episode, we talk about design thinking and service design, and are there still relevant concepts In today's world service design was a hot topic some 10 years ago, but now it seems to have been forgotten and run over by by terms like user experience, emotional design, and transformation design.

Let's find out from two accomplished design experts what they think.

Welcome, Adi and Laura, I'm happy to have you here. [00:01:00]

Adithya: Glad to be here.

Irina: Thank you. To start with, I would like to, uh, ask you that, who you are. So can you tell a bit about yourself? Do you want to start, Laura?

Laura: Yes, sure. Thank you, Ivo, uh, having me here. It's a pleasure to, to be, uh. Back to IDBM and talk about, uh, my experiences today.

So my name is la um, and I work as a AI transformation lead in innovation transformation consultancy. Helen. My, my roots come from the, uh, creative field. So, um, I originally graduated as an industrial design and, and, um, kind of established my career as a service designer. Um, uh, alongside of the studies here in, uh, Aalto, in IDBM and Drew different twists and turns, nowadays I'm

leading the transformation initiatives, uh, uh, within Helen, uh, and within, within our client organizations, uh, here in Finland and also [00:02:00] globally.

Um, so happy to talk about, uh, my journey and experiences and as you said, what is the role of service design in, in nowadays field?

Irina: Okay, Adi.

Adithya: Alright. I'm also really glad to be here, so thanks for inviting me. Um, my name is Adithya, but everyone knows me as Adi and I have quite a complex background. I'm currently a lead designer at Finnair and leading the service delivery part of it.

So. Quite a lot of service design related things do happen on an ongoing basis, at least with my job. Uh, my background is a bit all over the place. I started off, I like to say, as a accidental engineer, and from that made the switch into physical product design and industrial design. Mm-hmm. And I think about 12 years ago, I made the switch from that to the digital side.

So I was doing UX and strategic design and service design at that point for like various consulting [00:03:00] companies. And then maybe about eight years ago, I moved here to Finland to Aalto and to do the IDBM and get my teeth into the business side of things and understand the whole transdisciplinary nature of things.

And yeah, since then I have done. Mm, A variety of things. I worked in the social impact space as a consultant for a while. I have been running like a startup on the side and now Finnair for the last three and a half years, so. Lots to say about both design thinking and service design. So looking forward to this conversation.

Irina: Yes. Really nice. So then we have the right guests here to speak about this topic, and you both have a really, uh, kind of varied, uh, career paths. So you have been working with many, many different topics along the way. Uh. To start with as a question, I would like to ask that that, [00:04:00] now thinking back, what has been the role of the IDBM program in your professional development?

Maybe a, you can start with this. Sure.

Adithya: So since my background was both from the tech side and the design side, I had a good sense on in both those areas, but the business side was

always. Sort of missing, I would say. And while I was working with different startups with different companies, and I understood like functionally like how e-commerce should work and how platforms work, it was coming to IDBM.

That really gave me like a proper sort of grounding in the business side of things and in the entrepreneurial side of things, because I got to do. Quite a few sort of courses from the Aalto Ventures program, which I don't think is existing anymore. Uh, it's got a new name. And so doing those courses, doing sort of the business track courses, that [00:05:00] really helped sort of expand my knowledge and made me more sort of multidisciplinary as a practitioner.

And that has also helped me. Be better equipped to sort of have that business vocabulary to talk business with both clients when I was in consulting and also stakeholders within such a large organization like Finnair.

Irina: Mm. It's interesting how important language is in this, uh, work.

Adithya: Absolutely. In the scale of

Irina: work, you, you kind of need to know the, all the, uh, different, uh, even the jargon of a certain area in order to get your ideas through.

Yep. What about you, Laura? How do you see the, what is the role of IDBM in your, in your professional development?

Laura: Actually, likewise, as, as Adi said, um, but from the different angle. So as I am coming with the, uh, from the creative, uh, industry and with the design background, I think it was hugely bene hugely beneficial to study.[00:06:00]

Um. Operations, um, development, like operational excellence in the technical school as well as, um, uh, studies in the business school in order to be able to speak the language of the company and, and kind of understand the core KPIs and metrics and kind of fundamentals, how organizations work. Um, so I definitely think that the IDBM, my master's program.

Kind of provided those tools and, and viewpoints that I kind of later came across with within my career, uh, quite many times. And even kind of the industry project, I'd say that majority of my work nowadays is, is like a continuous industry project. So similar initiatives, so. Multi-stakeholder engagement in global environments and where, where you have different types of expertise and, and you need to facilitate that complexity, stretch your own, uh, thinking and, and, and kind of reflect your, on your own capabilities and

strengths and [00:07:00] weaknesses and, and kind of make sure that the team succeed, uh, succeeds within the initiative.

So. Definitely, I think, uh, kind of, uh, a first experience in, in that, uh, one of the first experiences in, in that type of way of working, which, uh, frankly to say I, I see that is, uh, evolving in the industry all the time. I, I kind of see that all different carriers are more and more requiring this type of multidisciplinary collaboration and facilitation skills and rather than deep expertise in, in one kind of single area.

So, yeah. Broad answer, but definitely see that the different courses and, and the different experiences were hugely beneficial for my career. And, um, of course all the networks and, and people that you meet here, uh, Finland is rather small country, so you come across with the people, um, throughout your career and throughout your life in, in different contexts.

Yeah,

Irina: I totally agree. I started IDBM in 97, and I still [00:08:00] have that network left, which already started back then during the studies.

Irina: yes. So I'm in contact with some of the people. I met them on a regular basis and I have even gotten some job opportunities through the network. And it's really important to know people from different fields already in the beginning of your career.

Adithya: Yeah, quite often. Um, when I joined Finnair, I found out that. One of my bosses, she had been also doing IDBM, I think in the early two thousands. And she had not even like made the connection. And then when I said I'm from IDBM, she's like, oh yeah, okay. So that was nice. And then later on, like when we had a couple of openings come up, I knew people in the program who would be like really good fits for it.

So. I'm always trying to sort of grow this sort of mini IDBM group at Finnair that in that way, I think there's like three or four of us there now. [00:09:00]

Irina: Okay. That's excellent. Yep. That's good news. Also for the current students, I guess be aware that they might be contacting you on a regular basis, says.

Okay. Um, maybe we could move on to the hot topics in design field. Uh, what do you think, what is now discussed at the moment in, in, within the creative industry, within the design design industry?

Laura: Well, if I kind of, uh. Point out the elephant in the room is, uh, I, I'd say that it's ai definitely that's, uh, that's, uh, the number one hot topic right now.

And that's only in the, in the, uh, design industry, but across all the industries and how it will transform. Um. Basically everything, all the ways of working and how people behave and, and operate, uh, et [00:10:00] cetera. So, um, definitely a huge question. And there's, uh, surely in the, in the design field, also discussion that will it actually, um, or what kind of work would it, will the AI automate and, and a kind of cover, and what is the role of human and, and, uh, creative expertise in the future?

Irina: Do you have any ideas on, on this, uh, ai, Adi, or do you have also some other issues that you would like to, uh, put on the table?

Adithya: Well, I do have lots of thoughts on ai, though I come into this more as a AI skeptic and that I don't think it's going to make people lose jobs to the extent that they're scared.

I think the best way forward for AI as they are now with the whole agent tech models and the large language models, is that. If there needs to be a human involved to both ensure that these things are being accurate, they have a tendency to sort of hallucinate and to also be, [00:11:00] to have that sort of human presence in the whole process.

Like I work in very much a customer facing domain. Mm-hmm. And. Any sort of AI use that we can think of, it's always in support of the human activity rather than replacing human activity. So I think that's one thing to sort of keep reminding ourselves because a lot of the conversation I keep seeing is AI wants to replace people and designers are maybe at risk.

But I would also say that comes from. Another sort of hot topic, I would say in the design space, which is that there is a need for designers to talk business more. Mm-hmm. And if you're able to talk business more and you're able to have these conversations with C-level executives, with key stakeholders about what value you are bringing and what value design processes bring to the organization, then it's not.

As much of a risk that you are in that your work will be [00:12:00] replaced by ai. So being able to sort of prove your value needs that business, um, like vocabulary to communicate that. And so I would say those go almost hand in hand that the rise of AI and the need for designers to sort of show their value by talking business have to go together.

Laura: I definitely agree what you uh said, and I see similarly that, uh. Kind of more maybe, uh, at this first wave of ai, more kind of manual tasks, uh, such as, let's say. Visualization task can be automated at some level, uh, with ai, but more kind of this hu understanding of human and human centricity and customer centricity and turning that in the language of business and what it means for the organization, what it means for, uh, technology.

Uh, I think we defin definitely that's a strategic question for organizations and design led [00:13:00] uh, approaches and capabilities are needed for facilitating that discussion and then bringing that empathy and, and human centric, um, uh, uh, thinking, uh, and, and capabilities and tools. Um. That I think that's even, uh, more relevant than ever.

So the question is not, maybe that is, is AI replacing designers? Uh, but moreover, is it changing the role of, of designers? And do designers also need to let go a little bit of the traditional design identity and, and more maybe. Look, uh, uh, a bit more strategically and, and a bit more broadly about the different areas and, and, uh, expertise and, and skills that they need to evolve and learn in order to be relevant in the organization.

And as as said before, I think this is not only. A question for the designers. Uh, uh, even, but the same thing comes across [00:14:00] with, uh, when, when developers, for example, are thinking about what's, what's the future of, of coding or development. I think the same thing that you can't really focus on manual task and being, being very focused on, on singular, uh, thing.

Very, very kind of individual dependent, uh, uh, things. But you need to be. You need to evolve skills that kind of incorporate collaboration, facilitation, thinking about strategic questions, creating new innovations, and being very creative and looking for the future opportunities. And definitely designers and design skills are needed, uh, for this type of development.

Adithya: Hmm. I agree though. I would say there's one caveat there, which is that. Part of why designers are feeling this sort of panic and as you said, feeling like, oh, like our skills are being undervalued or not being given attention [00:15:00] is the place that we've been put into by the popularization of design

thinking in the early two thousands because it framed design as this creative activity.

There's like craft involved. There's. Sticky notes involved and you come up with ideas and you make something pretty, and that misunderstanding has sort of stuck through even outside of the design domain. So while within our domain, we understand there's so much more to design, because it was used as this easy to explain term as to what design is, that it gave almost false advertising for what we do.

So now from the executive side, I feel that there may be people who are under informed or misinformed that okay, like I can ask TA, GPT for ideas. Like what do I need designers to come ideate for? And that's why I think what you said [00:16:00] earlier about facilitating becomes really important because I think.

One of the things that designers need to embrace going forward is this ability to not just be creative, but to facilitate creativity around them. So they're sort of the people who enable creativity rather than just being the only creative ones. So that's a big part of where that value should come from,

Laura: right, right.

And kind of creativity itself. It's not the value or means to an end, yes. But moreover, what is the context and what is the purpose? What is the impact that you're exactly aiming to create or co-create? And then you're gonna of provide that approach and tools for succeeding in that, uh, or succeed, uh, making your team, uh, to succeed in, in that goal, uh, of delivering something meaningful and, and something impactful.

But yeah. Mm agree. And, uh, design thinking was, was quite, um. Widely. [00:17:00] Commercialized, uh, uh, by Idio, uh, at, at some point of, of their career. And it had at, um, some, some ups and downs in the industry and how people, uh, nowadays perceive design, uh, as something that anyone can learn. And, and, uh, any kind anyone can do quite easily.

Just putting their creative mindset on. Mm-hmm. Switching, switching the light bulb and, uh. Magically, uh, everything's possible. So, um, yeah, there's a good question. If, if there actually is a thing called design thinking. Design

Irina: thinking. Mm-hmm.

I remember when design thinking was first launched at that, at least I felt that that was not for the designers. That was mainly for, for non-designers. Obviously, uh, and I, it didn't feel relevant, uh, for me to be used as a tool, but do you think [00:18:00] that now we can kind of let go of this term?

Adithya: I would say it needs to go away partly because from the perspective of being like a facilitator of impact and, um, creativity in sort of service of that impact.

Design thinking gives people a very sort of rigid, narrow view into what that involves. And one of the most common things you would've heard over the years is, let's do double diamond. Almost like that is the approach and that is the process it without recognizing that even within this very easily portrayed double diamond, there's like a thousand different methods and approaches that could define each aspect of it.

So one thing that I've been doing the last. Three years now is I work with the Helsinki incubator programs and run like a workshop and a guest lecture on design approaches for [00:19:00] startup entrepreneurs. And it's all about deconstructing design thinking and sort of getting rid of that term and focusing more on what it entails, like what is.

Underlying as the foundation of that design process that then you can use as the way to facilitate their work and their goals in terms of what each of those entrepreneurs is trying to achieve. So I am definitely in favor of getting rid of the term.

Irina: What about you, Laura?

Laura: Well, I have to say that I'm maybe not that much of a terminology person.

Um, so kind of not like strictly against or, or, um. Or in favor for, for any of the terms. But, uh, maybe my critique comes from that. Exactly. Like I said, design thinking kind of proposes that. The way to succeed in business and create impact is through a certain process, [00:20:00] uh, which is the double diamond. And, and rather maybe I'm more interested or where I see more value is, is putting the focus on how organizations operate, how, how do organizations work and, and, uh, there's a lot of traditional structures.

There's a lot of traditional cultural values that kind of. I think are the root cause behind why organizations can't innovate or be creative, uh, what is kind of

putting them down, uh, such as psychological safety. Like do we have a space where people can freely kind of trust and be open and, and kind of flourish, uh, and, and be creative within each other?

Or do we have kind of an engine or a system that actually, um. Slows that power down through, um, culture. [00:21:00] Culture, uh, such as kind of, um, um, uh, risk, uh, mitigation and, and psychological unsafeness and, uh, siloed ways of working or, or, um. Um, benefit structures or models, which are, uh, driving us to, to very short term benefits.

And I think now we're kind of living a time where we've. Really, our organizations should really look, uh, more over to the long term goals and, and long term benefits, benefits alongside of the short term optimization. Uh, otherwise it's very difficult to be relevant in, in today's market and, and in in long term.

So in order the. Transform your organization and perform in your organization and, and uh, uh, be the market winner. I think you really need to put a focus and emphasis that do we have the cultural values, uh, the right motivated people, uh, the right skills and [00:22:00] capabilities and governance structures, uh, in the organizations that are kind of really supporting us to succeed in those goals.

Hmm. And in this context, and, and, and kind of long, long story short, I think it's a bit less irrelevant, uh, if we are talking about design thinking yes or no, because, uh, these are, I, I think, are the underlying causes limiting us. Uh,

Irina: we have here at all the research, uh, program on creativity and there was this, uh, creative leap project, which now, uh, ended And, uh, one of the things, what they were researching there was the organizational creativity and then also, uh, personal creativity within the organization. And in order for companies to succeed and get a better revenue need, you need both. So, uh, personal creativity is not enough.

You also need to be creative on a organizational level, and I think that the results were quite promising because for uh, companies it's important that [00:23:00] they understand that. What is the value of then supporting the, the creativity in the organizational level as.

Laura: Exactly. And then if we think about change and, and kind of how do you lead a change towards creativity, for example, it starts from an individual, uh, the individual influences to the team, uh, the team influences to the organization.

So they're all interconnected. But I think one of the, kind of what I've seen throughout my career, the first step, uh, to kind of change the culture and, and, uh, change the ways of working the organization, it starts from the top management. So, uh, is the top management team and the individuals there ready to kind of reflect, for example, their own creativity or their own ways of working or their own values?

Uh. That has a direct effect that the whole organization and, um, how well it's, it is able to [00:24:00] operate.

Adithya: And if I can build on that, it's also very crucial right now when the global economy feels a bit shaky and fewer prices are going up and there's always like AI compute needs more resources. So with all these sort of factors, it.

There's a trend where more and more leadership is starting to sort of get more conservative, I would say, where they're more looking at mitigating risk rather than looking at opportunity. And maybe that requires a slight sort of rethink that, okay, like, yes, we need to lower our risk. Yes, we need to make sure that we don't take a hit from all these sort of outside factors.

But then there's also opportunity there to innovate, and it really matters what leadership incentivizes inside of all of this. And if they're incentivizing survival rather [00:25:00] than sort of exploration, then you can feel a bit stifled. And it also like filters down, as you said, like it goes very top down, that okay, leadership is looking to survive and like all our initiatives are about the here and now, but.

To be creative, whether it's at an organization or at an individual level, you need that freedom to explore and that I think is something that more leadership can encourage or should encourage.

Laura: And if I continue from there, I think this can be directly measured. For example, uh, from the amount of time that the leadership team uses for, uh, I like to use these terms, performance and, and transformation.

So how much focus do you use on and on, uh, observing your past performance and optimizing that? Rather than, do you use from your 60 minute meeting, how much time to discussing about the transformation and innovations and future opportunities? So that has a direct uh, effect on the whole organization's [00:26:00] performance.

Irina: How do you calculate that?

Laura: Well, for example, it, it can be just as simple that, uh, the amount of time, uh, the leadership team spends together. Let's say they have a six 60 minute meeting once a week. So how much of that time is used for the performance discussion and how much time it's used for, the transformation discussion and, and maybe more traditionally.

Uh, most of the times the 60 Minutes is used for the performance. Yeah, yeah. And now I think there, there's a shift, uh, that more and more time is, is spent and reserved and it's acknowledged that, okay, we need this more long-term thinking and futures thinking and scenarios and, and creativity in order to, um, survive and, and, and, uh, thrive, uh, in the future.

Hmm.

Irina: How do you then foster creativity?

Laura: First of all, I have to say that, uh, I think for maybe many listeners, uh, creativity can be a bit imitating, uh, word [00:27:00] that it, is it something artistic and I'm not creative, but I, I'd claim that all of us are, uh, and it can be, for example, creative problem solving. So many, for example, technical people might consider that they're not creative that much, but if you observe.

Work of an, of an architect or developer or, or, um, any of the possible roles. It, that's kind of, I think that's the essence, like more like even like mathematical problem solving mm-hmm. That you need to do every day. Uh, and, and maybe it's more of a mindset shift if you, if you kind of, if you focus on that problem solving on the opportunities and, and different directions you could take rather than.

Limiting that what's not possible and, and how it's difficult to solve an issue.

Adithya: Yeah, I fully agree and I see that all the time because I work both with sort of developers and business stakeholders who have [00:28:00] spent many years in the aviation domain. So they know about like how every sort of technical detail works, but then they're always thinking, oh, but then it can't do this.

It can't do that. Like we know that it hasn't worked this way. And so much of my work involves sort of facilitating sessions with them on how can we push the, it can't happen, how can we change the, we've done it this way, or it has

always worked this way, so it'll continue working this way. And at least with the developers, it's a bit easier because, um, the designers work very closely with them.

And if there are limitations, then we actually get to work with them and get to understand from them. Okay, what are the ways we can work around this? What are the ways we can creatively like overcome this limitation? And the developers have also seemed to enjoy it so far. So at least that's been good.

And from the stakeholder side, what you said about the long-term thinking like really plays a part. So, [00:29:00] uh, we have like this one group which handles sort of the end-to-end customer journey and both like what happens on good days and what happens on bad days, and. One of the things that I was working with them recently on was, okay, here's the roadmap that you have for say the next six months.

Do you know what you have to do after that? Do you know what you're going to do after that? And the answer was sort of like, it's in all of our heads, but we don't have it like down. So once, um, we sat down together and we did like this futures based workshop where we used the three Horizons model. And basically said, okay, here's like the future that you want to get to.

And for all of them it was like really sort of fun because they hadn't had the opportunity to really think what is their ideal dream state. It was always like, what can we do and what can we sort of incrementally improve? But never [00:30:00] really, if we had like no limitations, like where would we like to go?

And once they had that, they were like, okay, so then if we change like these two, three things and then now we can actually get towards that. So giving them sort of that inspiration helps a lot in this process.

Laura: Exactly. If I continue from there, um, I think many designers have this kind of, uh, quite, uh, strong kind of inner.

Uh, drive to create something purposeful or something meaningful, like value for the customers or value for the environment or, or, or something like that. And maybe many of the roles traditionally don't have that, uh, visibility of why we are actually developing this single thing in the, in the customer journey and how it, how does it connect with the bigger picture.

So I think that's one. Asset that designers can help to see and, and uh, understand, uh, by engaging people early on from the process, um, to, to kind of

[00:31:00] give this, uh, common purpose, um, and, and meaningfulness for the, for the works that they're doing. But you ask about the creativity. Yes. Yeah. We were going around it.

So, um, uh, I, I think the question was that how do you, how to foster, create, foster the creativity. Uh, so I'd, I'd come back to the, like, if we look in the organizational perspective, I, I'd come back to the organizational culture. Um, uh, once again, so cre I think creativity requires, for example, an environment that is kind of safe.

Uh, there's a psychological safety for failing, uh, for exploring different kind of ideas. So I think that's the very, for a starting point. If, if that doesn't exist, it's, it's very hard to change the organization to be creative. Um, and I think then there's the individual lens that what kind of turns on your, [00:32:00] uh, creative mindset and, well, for example, for me it, it's sometimes.

Um, getting bored or, or, you know, um, doing experiences that are enjoyable. Uh, kind of ex exploring different kind of opportunities and, and getting meeting with people. Those can be good enforcements for the creativity.

Adithya: Yeah. I think from the organization perspective, I agree on the culture. The one thing I would say can be sort of used to catalyze the change in that culture is to almost remind people that.

They have the permission to be creative, even within the limitations of what they can do, and that I think is very easily forgotten because you're doing the day-to-day work, you're doing the things that you've always done, so it's easy to forget that you can think of other ways of doing the same thing.

You can go outside of what is known and what is like [00:33:00] understood to see, okay, like is there something new? Is there a new technology out there that we can adopt? Is AI going to maybe help transform some aspect of this? Those kind of like open-ended questions only come when you yourself feel that yes, I have the space to be creative and.

I think that can be both top down where leadership says, please do be creative, but it can also be from the individual, like sort of spreading through the organization where each one can realize that they have some amount of room to be creative even within whatever limitations they already have.

Irina: In one of, uh, one of the researchers in this creative leap was saying that creativity often happens in the liminal space and time, [00:34:00] so it's

somewhere in between. Mm-hmm. And it might not even be given, uh, as a kind of a, a time and space for being creative, but it is a perfect. Place for it. So for example, uh, ad hoc coffee breaks or, uh, something that is not a little bit out of normal.

And then that could be then the, the, the true point where you can be creative.

Laura: I also think, uh, what I've observed throughout my career, um, is that maybe non-designers tend to get very uncomfortable. In the early stages of the process that designers often refer as fuzzy front end. So the fuzzy space is difficult as we don't know yet the answers as we don't know what the end solution will be.

Um. And I, I, I'd say that it often connects with the feeling of losing control. Uh, and I think organizations are quite [00:35:00] built on the feeling of control, that everything should be followed by the process and on control and, and the risks are, uh, managed. So I think that's also a little bit point of reflection that how do we.

Embrace this fuzziness as we are living very fuzzy era right now in the market. We don't know what AI will, uh, you know, um, um, what's the end result of, of the AI transformation for the society as a total.

Adithya: Just to build on that, that actually reminds me of one of the key ways of reframing that fuzziness in your head, which I think designers can really sort of help facilitate in the people around them, which is that.

The fuzziness and ambiguity can be a bit overwhelming because you don't know what is the right direction. It's not like this is good, this is bad, but it's rather, this is good in some ways, bad in some ways. This is good in other ways. Bad in other ways, so there's no like clear sort of choice. And it [00:36:00] ties back to two things which people should recognize.

I think this also applies like to life in general, but I think even in organizations, which is that decisions. Which have this kind of fuzziness are opportunities to shape those directions based on what is important to you or what you would like to go towards. And that is based on the values that you said, that if you know what your values are and you have like a clear sort of company principles or this is what the company would work according to.

Then in that fuzzy space, you can start recognizing which pathways are opportunities to really sort of embody those values. And you can also recognize

which pathways can help sort of enhance those values. And that helps sort of reframe this ambiguity as more like an opportunity to sort of live by those values.

That's an excellent point. Sorry I said values too many times.

Laura: No worries. Values are important. [00:37:00] That was excellent point. And I think like. Uh, people tend to get scared if their decisions are wrong or right, but you can always come back that they were right at the time when reflecting my values and my choices that I had in my hand and the knowledge I had in my hand.

Um, at that point they were right. Exactly. So I think that's also a bit comforting, maybe message or topic to, to, to focus on.

Irina: This one of the researchers also said about true creativity, that it requires both originality and effectiveness, but. I don't know if that's really a good way to describe creativity.

Do you have any thoughts on this, like originality and effectiveness?

Adithya: I think effectiveness matters a lot, especially in the sort of working industry, like in corporate world, because any creativity that is in service of a specific impact that you're aiming for. [00:38:00] Is relevant to the context you're in, that is what determines the effectiveness.

So that's always going to be a factor. Originality, I would say, is a trap that designers get into, especially like starting designers. It's, and this is maybe more me, but when I started off as a designer, one of the things for me was, okay, like I have this great idea and then I'd find out that someone had already tried something like it, and I'd feel disheartened.

The reality is that sure, you came up with an idea that someone else had, or there's an idea out there that seems to fit this context. There's nothing wrong with that because if an idea is serves that effectiveness and like delivers to that context and delivers the impact needed, then it doesn't matter how original it is, it is original to solve that problem that you're taking on.

So I think originality might be a bit. Overemphasized [00:39:00] from a designer perspective, but the effectiveness is essential.

Irina: Yeah. And maybe that is then underemphasized. Yes. Many times.

Laura: Exactly. Couldn't agree more. I think, um, originally goes hand in hand with creativity, but it, it can kind of entail, for example, how original is your approach on solving, uh, an issue rather than.

Was the outcome, original or not? Yeah. So, uh, yeah, I think there is, there is more means and complexity. They, they question how original the process or outcome should be in order of being creative and valuable. But effectiveness, definitely, I think. We all should be obsessed about the impact and obsessed about the effectiveness.

And, and that's I think the number one question you should kind of, uh, come back to, uh, when, when doing, you know, any of the work, uh, in nowadays environment.

Adithya: if I can just add to that from the impact perspective, it's not just about impact in [00:40:00] terms of what you're doing or the problem you're trying to solve.

It also needs to consider the sort of broader impact outside of that. So for example, if you're coming up with something and it works for the problem you're solving, but then later on it leads to say some form of inequality or some form of exploitation or some form of environmental degradation, then you need to be aware of that.

I think as designers we have like a responsibility as well that. When we say it's effective, we also need to consider the consequences of those effective solutions we come up with.

Irina: Now, let's, uh, move along with, uh, um, the other track that I wanted to discuss about, uh. Service design. Do you identify yourselves as service [00:41:00] designers nowadays?

Laura: Well, I can start, uh, the short answer would be no. No. Yes, yes. Uh, I, I consider kind of myself something as a, as a, uh, like a business strategist or, or business developer.

I definitely see that, uh, in my kind of core or in my backbone, there are service design capabilities and, and approaches of seeing things, uh, and what we discussed here, human centricity, customer, um, customer centricity, um, empathy, um, creative problem solving, uh, very. Visual way of thinking and, and, uh, concretizing, ab abstract things, embracing the fuzziness.

I think all of those are very much in my, in the backbone of, uh, who I am and what kind of practice I do nowadays. But, [00:42:00] uh, from a title perspective, uh, I'd say that they are now, uh, kind of broader, uh, capabilities and skills that, uh, um, um. Uh, kind of I present, uh, rather than purely focusing on, on being a service designer.

Mm-hmm.

Adithya: Yeah, I think it's a bit similar for me in that my role is broader because part of it involves working with stakeholders, almost like a in-house consultancy, that we're helping them deliver sort of their needs and their goals. But at the same time, if I look at sort of the core job that I do. I am responsible for the end-to-end customer journey being good.

So in that sense, service design is literally what I do and we actually have like journey maps that we build, service blueprints that we set up. So in my case, I would say that's the foundation of everything. And then on top of that, there's like the additional things that I do.

Irina: [00:43:00] I feel that then we, uh, as educators need to give some kind of identity for the.

For the students here and in the IDBM program, maybe that's a bit more ambiguous, I would say, as what is the identity? Uh, do you see that there's a future for the IDBM program? And is IDBM still relevant in today's, uh, working life?

Laura: I, uh, started this discussion by, uh, we were talking about the, uh, what was the purpose and, and role of IDBM in my own career.

And I, I, I, um, refer it that most of my work is, is like IDBM Industry Project and more and more multidisciplinary, uh, um, so very kind of, uh. Practically speaking. Yes, definitely. I think, uh, kind of the skills and the mindsets and the approaches that IDPM promotes are, uh, maybe, uh, even more relevant than ever.

Uh, so, so definitely there's a, [00:44:00] there's a need for this type of, uh, multidisciplinary disciplinary capabilities. But as we discussed here, I think kind of the, the role of, um. What are our ways of working and, and, uh, kind of through the change of ai, rethinking also, uh, the position, the purpose of kind of human work rather than what is automized and, and what are kind of the, the structures and processes that we utilize for working.

IDI think IDBM also needs to, um, encourage people to innovate that and rethink that in, in novel ways.

Adithya: Yeah, I fully agree that IDBM 100% has relevance now and going forward, and to build on what you said about the AI aspect, I had a chat with the current IDBM program director a few months back, and we were talking about how IDBM is [00:45:00] actually integrating AI into the ways of working of students already.

So the fact that the program is continuing to evolve and continuing to. Have its finger on the pulse of what is the domain and what is the world like, is going to also be an asset going forward. So it's not just about the multidisciplinarity, but the fact that the program continues to sort of refresh and update itself to stay relevant to the trends in the world.

That also contributes. And one more point I would say is. In the working domain, you are going to encounter not just multidisciplinarity, but multicultural environments and IDBM being like sometimes 50, 60% international also plays a huge part because it gives you that chance to sort of. Experience a multicultural environment, work together with people with different cultural backgrounds, different cultural ways of working and values, and that is something you will encounter in the working world as well, and it prepares you [00:46:00] really well for that.

Irina: We're wrapping up. Do you have any kind of a short tip for listeners on how to enhance creativity in the organization?

Laura: Well. The change starts within you. So leading by example, I'd say. Uh, and in order to do that, I think, uh, it require, requires a little bit, um, jumping today, uh, on, on comfort zone, kind of being very present, being quite balanced, uh, in, in who you are and where you are and, and why you're doing this.

So, starting from. Your personal individual journey and, and then leading by example, that that would may be my, my tip to consider and start from.

Adithya: And my tip actually builds on that because I think you have to lead by example. You have to show like what are the values design is bringing to an environment.

But [00:47:00] at the same time, I think you need a sense of humility that you're not the only creative one. So my tip would be. To both be humble and be

someone who sees the possibility to facilitate creativity in everyone around you. It could be the scrum master, it could be the developer. It could be the stakeholder.

It could be the product owner, it could be an executive, but there are opportunities to sort of facilitate and foster creativity in others that you are really well equipped for. So don't be afraid to do that.

Laura: And celebrate the successes. I, I, I think we as fis are sometimes not the greatest as kind of promoting each other and, and kind of saying out loud, loud, uh, what people, uh, when they're being creative or successful or, or being in their uncomfort zone, but, uh, winning, winning their fears.

So I think that needs to be also acknowledged that, uh, you kind of, [00:48:00] uh, raise up others and, and, uh, promote them when, when that's. Earned. Agreed.

Irina: That's a nice ending. Thank you very much, Laura. Thank you, Adi. Thank you. Thank you for having us.

Thank you for listening. I am your host Irina Viippola. This episode was edited by me and Aditya Parekh, and produced by the IDBM program at Aalto University.