Reflections from an infiltrator: From 'SD in Gov' to, um, 'kind of SD, elsewhere'

It's not a super catchy title. What I mean is, I'm not a Service Designer but I always try to 'do' service design in my day job. And yet again, SDGov has provided so much rich material for this, even after one day, even online.

The 'not a Service Designer'

I work in international development on evaluation, learning and social innovation. Like so many other non-Service Design attendees I met today, I see so much overlap in the principles and approaches I work with: participation, inclusion, collaboration, constant learning and aspiration for positive social impact.

The 'service designer'

Every. Single. Session I attended today sparked a thought, inspired an idea or provided a new approach that I can immediately take back to my day job.

- Applying **Martin Wright's Consequence Scanning** to a recent lengthy and immovable debate about what evaluation methodology to apply to a recent project would have been far more efficient process and invited more consideration of the consequences of different options on participation and voice.
- **Liam Hawkes and Charlotte Moore's talk about prototyping** and moving upstream from delivery to policy really resonated with discussions about moving evaluations from endline impact approaches to more experimental, formative ones to inform and de-risk interventions early on. This means working more with programmes colleagues, and this talk basically nailed the endless debate about independence vs collaboration in evaluation...
- **Mike Press, Hazel White and Barbara Mertlova's Convivial Conversations** ranged from platforms and tools for engagement to hormones and quilting. Yes. Quilting. I loved the 'chemistry of conversation', transformative listening, and LOVED the dramatic arc - not just in conveying stories but in choreographing interactions (hello 'choreographing', farewell 'planning'!). Good evaluation is predicated on good data, which comes from people who feel comfortable, trusting and engaged. This is good stuff for life, not just work!
- **Caroline Pizatto and Amber Westerholm-Smyth's workshop about personas** was honest and practical in de / reconstructing the approach to and use of and personas to move away from second hand stereotypes to more meaningful reflections of real people. The walk through of their research process and dissemination was motivating and refreshing, coming from a sector much less ready to work out in the open.
- Finally, **Julie Sun and Amy Bracewell's session on researching sensitive subjects**. My own career focus has been on sexual and reproductive health and rights, on subjects from safe abortion to gender based violence and early and forced marriage. Not only did they share vital but pragmatic

approaches to safeguarding participants, but (for the first time?) I heard about self-care for researchers to protect from vicarious trauma. So many evaluators, especially freelancers, are totally unprotected. We have much to learn.

Down to earth…

I know that SD isn't a silver bullet (because nothing is).

… but ready for take-off!

But after day 1 I feel like I have gained some new service design super powers and in the spirit of SDGov, I will share these far and wide and keep fighting the good fight for service design tools, approaches, and mindset to be adopted more widely.

Professional silos be damned. Thank you SDGov for sharing the love and upskilling us all in contributing to the delightfully messy and complex space that is social change.