

RESEARCH THEME

XLII Cycle – a.y. 2026/2027

Title of the doctoral research	From Speculation to Service: Investigating the Role of Futures Thinking in Service Design Practice
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Abstract	Speculative Design is inherently exploratory, committed to opening new perspectives for addressing wicked problems (Dunne & Raby, 2013). Designing preferable futures requires inclusive, critical, participatory, and thought-provoking reflections, alongside the capability to translate these into situated practices. Within this evolving landscape, the notion of speculative services is emerging as a promising intersection between Service Design and design futures. Speculative services use narratives, scenarios, and experiential enactments to explore, question, and rehearse possible service systems, not only as solutions but as means to interrogate their social, ethical, and political implications (Kravchenko & Forlano, 2025) Rather than focusing solely on problem-solving, these approaches emphasize the role of services as vehicles to surface assumptions, challenge dominant narratives, and expand what is imaginable in service innovation. This doctoral research aims to investigate how speculative approaches and speculative services are adopted in practice to design in and for complex systems with a long-term perspective. The research will explore how public and private actors experiment with speculative approaches in service contexts, how these practices enable critical engagement with socio-technical futures, and how they contribute to the evolution of design knowledge, capabilities, and competencies within Service Design.
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Keywords	Service Design, Speculative Services, Speculative Design
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