



## **How to be Considerate: Adapting service design for use beyond the design studio**

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### **Abstract**

This study shows the role Service Design can play in addressing social issues, explored through the topic of women and fear in public space. Due to the fear of sexual violence reinforced by society, women are constantly monitoring their movement within cities. This research aims to develop a response to this issue without inflating this fear or placing responsibility on women.

Co-design and Service Design tools were used to offer balance to the research and to neutralise tensions within the topic area. This led to an educational campaign that establishes the responsibility that allies have in reducing fear in public space, on a general public level, and also on a professional level, specifically those involved in designing public space.

The research and project's outcomes demonstrate how Service Design tools could be used in other disciplines (beyond traditional design studios) to develop empathy as well as addressing and solving social issues.

Keywords: service design, design for social innovation, social innovation, co-design

## Introduction

Women and access to public space is a societal issue that furthers gender inequality through the lack of awareness and consideration to inherent gender bias when designing public space. Attempts to address poor spatial design and public safety issues, including lighting and CCTV, do not prevent crime, and can also lower perceptions of comfort in space – that is, we feel more unsafe in those spaces (Kalms, 2019). To highlight the tensions experienced in public space, Phadke (2005) suggested designing with comfort; “...one possible way to radicalise the demand for greater access to public space is to forsake the category of ‘safety’ and to focus instead on ‘comfort’... Comfort suggests not just the absence of violence, but an active sense of belonging.” (Phadke, 2005, p. 57)

The ‘How to Be Considerate’ project explored the tensions around public space, analysed the current interventions, and developed educational tools to address the lack of design consideration given to poorly designed, uncomfortable public space. Through a literature review, the utilisation of co-design tools to gather primary research, and service design tools to analyze the primary research, this project identified an under-recognised group of actors within the user groups of public space.

Labelled as ‘Strangers’, this group of actors may not realise their actions can negatively affect perceptions of safety in public space, and thus they undermine women’s desire for use and access. This led to Part 1 of the project, ‘How to be a Considerate Stranger’, an intervention that encourages positive behavioural change to help lower fear women may experience in public space. Part 2, ‘How to be a Considerate Professional’, then uses service design-based tools to introduce considerate design decisions into professional areas beyond the design studio.

This paper documents the development of the ‘How to Be Considerate’ project. The project demonstrates how service design tools can be amended and used in other disciplines to help address social issues, and highlights the importance of incorporating comfort as a project outcome when designing for public space and safety.

## **Method**

This project addresses a complex social problem. By engaging with an iterative design approach, and embracing the challenges and reflections into the project's development, a robust outcome was delivered. To deliver this iterative approach, service design partnered with co-design methods and tools were used to find gaps within the topic's contradictions and complexities.

The project commenced conventionally with a literature review. During this time the researchers immersed themselves in public conversation, participating in workshops, talks, and discussions that established a wide range of views and opinions on the topic. This was followed by primary research utilising a co-design methodology, holding workshops with stakeholders and users of public space. Service design tools were then used to analyse the primary research. When combining these two methodologies, to ensure quality, the researchers engaged in short sequence iterations of the tools used. This enabled rapid prototyping and testing of the tools to ascertain the best approach. Feedback and guidance from key stakeholders and expert opinions also guided the evaluation of the methods and tools' effectiveness. It was this combination of methods in an iterative approach that allowed for key project insights to be generated and informed a unique perspective on a highly topical issue. Garth (2017) expresses the value of collaboration when addressing social innovation challenges, viewing co-design as a method in which designers can establish "relationships that form a foundation to meet future challenges" (p. 42). The final project outcome demonstrates how this focus on collaboration, both within user groups and methods, can produce viable social innovations.

## **Literature Review**

A design research literature review is pooled from several different studies, an interdisciplinary approach, with research from areas such as criminology, psychology, and anthropology providing theories and models for understanding the social problem (Blessing, 2009). Understanding theories surrounding women and fear of public space, and how this has informed opinions and perspectives on solutions, allowed the design researchers to develop a well-rounded understanding of the issue. This is particularly crucial for understanding Phadke's (2005) call for "comfort" as

a direction for design, a call that addresses the concept of the 'Female Fear'. The 'Female Fear' is an inflated fear that exists in addition to basic fight or flight, created through gender-based violence or harassment, and the societal rhetoric around women and public space (Vera-Gray, 2018). This fear controls behaviour in public space, furthering gender inequality, and access to public life.

The process of completing a literature review in the initial stages of the project allowed the researchers to gain an understanding of the community of practice that currently exists to manage female safety in public spaces. By building an understanding of the current interventions in the space, such as the numerous safety apps, the researchers were able to identify the limitations of current interventions and the opportunities for new interventions. Furthermore, by engaging in critical analysis and reflection of the current interventions, the researchers were able to identify that apps such as this may add to the 'Female Fear', and made it an objective to produce an outcome that did not inflate this fear. By developing a comprehensive understanding of the community of practice through completing a literature review, the researchers were able to build a comprehensive criteria to guide the development of the project and the resulting outcome.

### **Co-design in Service Design**

Co-design is a participatory design method that is often used in empathic design methodology, where the line between design researcher and the user is blurred (Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, & Koskinen, 2014). Users are invited to go through the design process, their expertise in their lived experience helping to define the design problem and develop solutions (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

Co-design as a research tool is popular within the design field of safer public spaces as demonstrated through the multiple co-design sessions that have occurred across Melbourne. These include workshop collaborations such as that between XYX Lab and Plan International Australia involving a range of stakeholders in developing concepts for more gender-inclusive cities (Kalms, 2017). Perhaps the most important aspect of these workshops is that large stakeholders, such as Melbourne City Council, can see how to incorporate and embed women's opinions and perspectives in their decision making, through often realistic and actionable design proposals.

Co-Design was utilised within this research project in two capacities: firstly, as a method of immersion in public discussion, with the Researcher as Participant in a workshop run by XYX lab and, secondly, with the Researcher as a Workshop facilitator, investigating and tailoring co-design and service design tools for this research project.

An observation when participating in the XYX lab workshop was the dominance of women as participants. Women are experts in their lived experience, and we as designers must listen to and incorporate their expertise in our designs to create places that women are comfortable in. However, this dynamic also left an uncomfortable gap of male participation in the workshop. Recruitment for this workshop was open to whoever responded to the promotional flyers. The lack of male participation was not intentional, but it did highlight a common participation outcome when dealing with gender issues. By incorporating targeted invitations into the recruitment strategy for workshops run for this project, the researchers ensured that men were equally involved. This provided a space for men to not only understand and listen to women's experience of public space but also to be part of developing solutions to the problem.

The co-design workshops were run using a generative approach, which aims to "...facilitate or trigger the user's imagination and expressions with tools provided by design researchers, while the analysis is left to the experts" (Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, & Koskinen, 2014). This approach was used due to the complex nature of this topic, leaving the researchers with the responsibility of using their knowledge from the literature review, and understanding of tensions within this review, to guide participants in possible directions for the project development.



Figure 1 – Participants bridging the gap between the current situation and ideal situation in the researcher facilitated co-design workshop

### **Service Design Tools for Analysis**

Service design tools were used to analyse this qualitative data generated from the co-design workshops. The first tools used were personas. As the key actors targeted when designing for safety in public space materialised (primarily women, predators, and bystanders), this prompted reflection on the missing group of participants in the XYX Lab workshop the researcher participated in.

Upon reflection on this group, and their absence from developing and being part of solutions, the researcher identified them as a new and underutilised actor within the project space. The design researcher labelled this group ‘strangers’, a different form of bystander or ally, predominantly a male in a public space that is unaware of the fear they may be causing.

Once this group of actors was identified, journey mapping and scenario-building tools were engaged with, to play out the effect this actor might

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have on perceptions of safety. By changing the behaviour of the ‘stranger’ ever so slightly, the researchers realised this could reduce the inflated perceived fear women experience in public space. As this shift in the design process meant a focus on behavioural change, the researchers went back to the literature review and engaged with ethicists to guide the outcome (identifying methods of intervention) and enrich the personas of potential users. The outcome for this research materialises these ‘levers’ of behavioural change back to the user, through objects that measure and then communicate the differences in how women can experience public space.

A barrier that presented itself both during the research and testing stages, was challenging biases. During the co-design workshop, the challenge was encouraging participants to explore new solutions, rather than falling back on solutions that change women's behaviour. These biases were then challenged again with the outcome, flipping the responsibility of safety away from women, and onto “the stranger”. In both these stages, the iterative approach to the design process allowed the researchers to engage with these barriers as useful parts of the process, rather than as roadblocks.

## **Outcomes**

This research project produced two distinct but connected outcomes.

### **1. How to be a Considerate Stranger**

The first outcome is an educational campaign in the form of a supporting guide and tools targeting the identified group of ‘strangers’. This guide explores the scenario of a stranger walking behind a woman at night and how this may increase fear, identifying the responsibility of the stranger to change their behaviour in three sections:

The environments in which it occurs and why people may have a heightened fear in these environments.

Methods of handling this situation, along with “add-ons” which can help make the person feel even safer.

Methods that should not be used or can increase fear.

The purpose of this guide is to educate people, particularly men, about how women experience public space. It does this by using a scenario that is commonly experienced. Secondly, it aims to show that men have a responsibility to lower the fear women experience in public space, by giving them options when responding to the scenario.

The guide is designed to go alongside educational material focused on bystander intervention and “call it out” style campaigns. The guide is downloadable through the ‘How to Be Considerate’ website, to allow for amplification of this message.

It is anticipated that if people discuss this topic, through this particular scenario, it can have an impact on fear in public space. This scenario happens daily and if men respond to this stimulus, taking on its message, this provides us with a way of lowering the impact of sexual violence and creating a more inclusive and understanding society.



Figure 2 – The ‘How to Be a Considerate Stranger’ guide

## **2. How to be a Considerate Professional**

'How to be a Considerate Professional' is an educational workshop, exploring the importance of men understanding their role in the scenario analysed in 'How to be a Considerate Stranger'. It further expands the conversation about women and predators in public space, exploring how others can aid this situation – specifically those involved in designing public space.

The design outcomes for this part of the project are workshop materials that support participants to analyse designs and observe how design impacts fear in public space. The materials created include:

Interactive Journey Mapping

Considerate Calculator and Fear Mapping

### **Interactive Journey Mapping**

These bespoke materials help communicate the tool journey mapping, a technique primarily used within service design, to a more general audience. Journey mapping tools are usually used to analyse how a customer might experience a service and potential pain points. This tool uses magnets to recreate journey points exiting a Melbourne train station. The magnet set includes one-point perspective frames and various physical feature magnetic pieces, that participants can piece together to recreate the journey through key physical design features.

This is a reflective process, one that encourages the participants to notice and break down the specific design decisions within the space, and prompts them to start discussing how these decisions may impact fear.

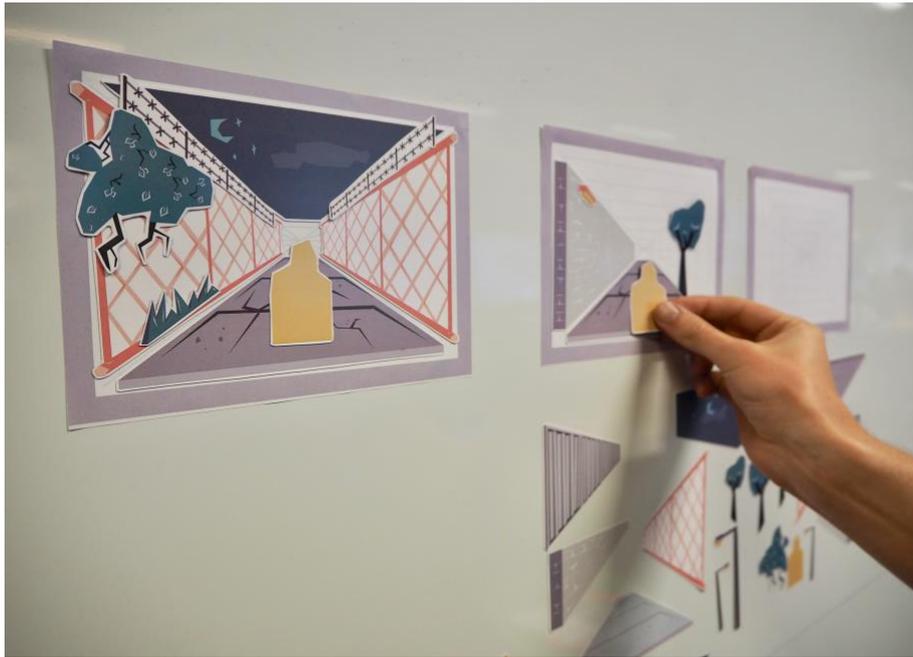


Figure 3 – Journey Mapping tools

### **Calculator And Fear Mapping**

The 'Considerate Calculator' is a tool designed to help participants apply their newly acquired knowledge regarding physical aspects that increase fear, to analysing Victoria Park Station in Melbourne, Australia. By getting participants to calculate how "bad" each design aspect is within the space from 1 to 5, it establishes the primary design aspects that influence fear, giving context to their discussion around why this location creates fear at the beginning of the workshop.

Participants then plot the results from the Considerate Calculator on the Fear Map. This Fear Map consists of an x and y-axis stating the 'journey stage', linking these calculations back to the very human experience of fear through the 'heart rate' on the x-axis.

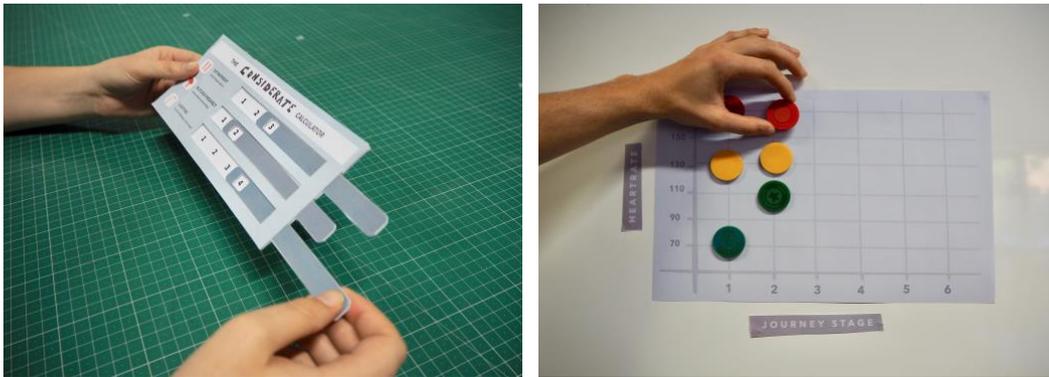


Figure 4 and 5 – The ‘Considerate Calculator’ and Fear mapping

By using this tool to plot the experience of this design, participants can see the entire journey from a new perspective. This illustrates the objective of this workshop – that fear in public space can be predictable and influenced if you pay attention to design aspects that increase fear.

For the development of the final workshop and tools, the researchers engaged with architecture students for testing. This was crucial in developing co-design tools that were transferrable to other disciplines, but primarily influenced the usability of the workshop tools. The students commented that they were not taught to view their designs from the user's perspective in this way, especially from the angle of fear, nor were they encouraged to consider how gender might influence the experience of their designs. The participants found this new perspective, looking at their work through the female perspective, to be a valuable and meaningful way of analysing their work.

## Discussion

‘How to Be Considerate’ is a project that explores and communicates the overlooked and unspoken issues around how women experience public space. For the researchers, it highlighted two significant areas, discussed below.

**1. For a topical issue such as women's safety in public spaces, immersion in public discussion proved to be a critical success factor. However, the utilisation of service design and co-design tools working together highlighted assumptions and gaps, offering an opportunity for a design intervention.**

The iterative process engaged with for this research demonstrated how integral different opinions are for designing interventions for social problems, as it was developed through constant discussion with a range of people, from peers to professionals. This immersion in public discussion resulted in the researchers generating key insights, shaping the project, and highlighting assumptions made which were incorrect.

Service design tools and codesign can be used to analyse social issues, giving the design researchers techniques to explore the social tensions found through the literature review.

Rather than co-design directly resulting in an “outcome” for this project, it helped explore the topic and possible design opportunities, offering an engaging and productive format for primary research. However, without service design tools to analyse the outcomes from the co-design workshops, primarily personas, the value of the activity would not have been harnessed. Interestingly in the case of this research, it wasn't necessarily a lack of interest from a particular stakeholder group, but rather an area overlooked by other researchers. As such, we were able to use the combination of co-design and service design tools to identify this inactive participant.

## **2. Service design tools can be used outside of the design profession but a process of making them legible to non-designers needs to be engaged with.**

The use of service design tools within other professions to help develop empathy has gained in popularity, with service design moving into a transdisciplinary toolset utilised by numerous other professionals, not just trained designers. This project offered an opportunity to explore how low-fi, educational solutions can be developed which could have a broad range of impact outside of the design field.

The outcomes of this project target two significant groups of people - those curious to improve themselves and their actions in public space; and those that could have an impact on how public space is created and used. Despite these groups of people being involved in the day-to-day lived experience of public space, they haven't stepped back to consider the space as a whole. This posed the question: How could service tools be used in other disciplines (beyond traditional design studios) to address and solve social issues and develop empathy.

A variety of mechanisms were used:

By approaching this issue with humour, a tongue-in-cheek approach, openness, and understanding of other people's opinions, the project harnesses a broad appeal for numerous demographics and beliefs. The message is communicated through an inclusive and non-aggressive aesthetic, adding to this playfulness that can often be missing, especially when it comes to education on social issues.

The project outcomes move away from the classic printable service design tools with which designers are so familiar with, to make the tools more interactive and scenario-specific. This made the tools legible to non-designers as it materialised the space, allowing the user to play with different design interventions and see the direct impact they could have on perceptions of fear and lack of comfort in public space.

By making the service design tools legible, the researchers resolved some of the tensions around designers holding the tools and being the keepers of them, which can feel isolating for stakeholders engaging in the process. Further to this, these service tools can be fed back into co-design workshops as mechanisms to measure and reduce tensions in public space.

## **Next steps for this project**

This study shows the role Service Design can play in addressing social issues, through developing a response to women and violence in public space without further inflating fear or placing responsibility on women. Now that the design phase is complete and associated materials produced, the next step is for this project to be rolled out publicly. For the first part of the project, a grassroots campaign on how to be a considerate stranger, establishing partnerships with universities and youth engagement initiatives such as YMCA, will provide a platform for its launch. For the second part of the project, a service design kit for professionals, a partnership with local councils will be forged, offering internal training in a workshop form to build capacity for addressing women's safety in public space and space design.

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