

# FROM THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TO THE ERA OF IDEAS: EMERGENCE OF “ANARCHISM OF THE OBJECT”

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## ABSTRACT

Completed the first decade, we can go back and analyze the rapid changes occurring in our society in the early years of this century. Concepts such as technological development and consumerism, which emphasize the need to acquire new products, are giving way to new anti system trends based on the sharing of goods in search of new opportunities to maximize and reuse of resources. Concepts and design methodologies such as Cradle to Cradle begin to fall short: The new ideas are proposed toward new behaviors and new attitudes.

Within this idiosyncrasy, society and the arts see the rise of terms such as "anarchism of the object" or the so-called "sensemaking." Anarchism of the object tries to turn the paradigm imposed temporarily by producers. It advocates for the

opposition against the objects themselves, as they are understood today, and their system. On the other hand, the "sensemaking" is defined as the process by which a person gives meaning to the world he perceives, creating a self-knowledge.

Objects are static, materialized, while otherwise, the ideas on which they rely do not have a tangible reality, which gives us a very valid business tool. Since we can reverse the process, the time of the objects imbued with new ideas beyond to what they were intended.

This presentation describes the historical regression resulting in the need to develop these new concepts, rooted in the pursuit of consumer activism in favor of finding new models and systems, trying to get the product designed to transcend the development of ecodesigned

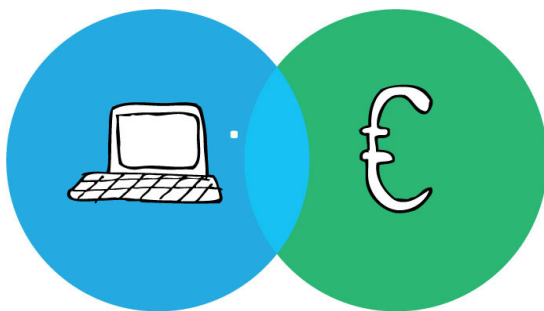
products, reaching to the development of new attitudes.

## INTRODUCTION

During the XX century society lived inside an environment inherited from the industrial revolution and the framework of “produce more, produce cheaper”. New technologies emerged one after the other changing the products in a high-speed wheel, at the same time the industry looked for continuous improvement in production processes and reducing costs.

As far as the consumer is concerned, concepts such as technological development and consumerism which emphasize the need to acquire new products were the rules of the market. People were supposed to buy new goods in relation to the apparition of a new version or their economic wealth.

Despite this fact the 2 pillars of innovation were technology and business.



In that framework, Design appeared like the tool to help to standardize products as well as to create the links between objects and society, its focus on functional and emotional benefits.

In the XXI century, we face a globalized world in a constant flowing state, leaving traditional patterns and plunging into new paradigms. It responds to emerging needs, arising from the natural evolution of human beings. Singles, dinkies, metrosexuales, adolescents, women alpha twins ... (AECOC 2006) are names coined by sociologists and marketing experts in recent years to try to reflect the new social reconstruction. Due to recent increase in market complexity and variety of consumers, there is a need for new tools to capture knowledge about them to incorporate it in the process of development. (Rhea, 2008)

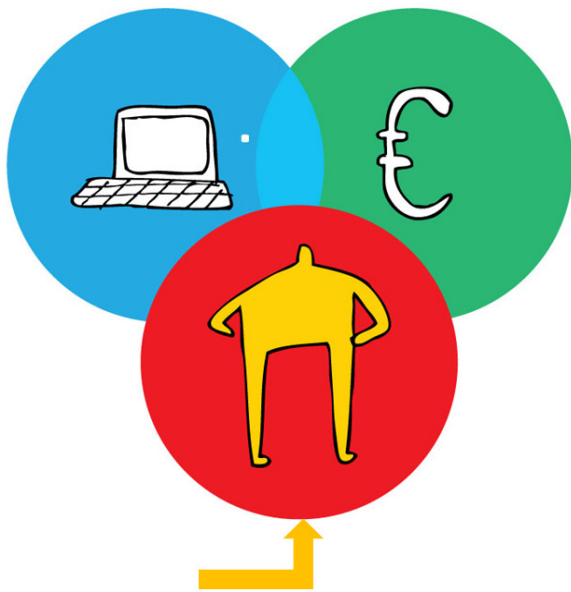
In general, this evolutionary change has meant new methodologies which would ensure the collection of consumer information and translate it into concrete specifications that can be understood and reviewed, to evaluate the adequacy of the initial concepts and final product relation to compliance with them.

This fact changes the game of innovation from designing FOR people to designing WITH people. Rather than being a tool or a methodology, we need to find a new mindset engaging people in the development of products and services thus creating new meaningful and profitable solutions and powerful organizations adaptable for change. (*Copenhagen Co'creation: "Designing for Change 09" Danish Design Association.*)

Designing WITH people involves being aware of the real needs of the customers and try to figure out not only the surface of the problem, but explore the reasons of them and the context surrounding.

It could imply the possibility of new approaches and discoveries, identifying significant breaks with the past.

Completed the first decade, we can go back and analyze the rapid changes occurring in our society in the early years of this century. It is possible to say that the new pillar of innovation is emerging; a new perspective is going to lead the development the next decades. Design still is the tool of the industry but becoming a holistic approach to understand the environment and being able to create links between them and the people, placing the objects to the background.



The persona is the new entrance to the development of concepts and the starting point of innovation. A well based understanding of the society and its individuals would be the emergence of value, which no longer will reside in the products and services developed by companies and delivered to consumers, but are created jointly between the company and the consumer. (*The Future of Competition: Co-*

*Creating Unique Value with Customers, C. K. Prahalad (Author), Venkat Ramaswamy )*

In this context, isolated concepts and design methodologies such as Cradle to Cradle begin to fall short: The new ideas are proposed toward new behaviors and new attitudes. It means that it is not only valid to research in the context of the product, it is necessary to understand the relations and the meanings of them with the individual. In that way the concept "sensemaking" appears, defined as the process by which a person gives meaning to the world he perceives, creating a self-knowledge.

So, nowadays, industry faces to a new mindset of the consumers who are concerned about the world they perceive, trying to put in context all the products involved in daily life. They try to identify and answer to their own needs and desires, having access to huge amount of information: it possible to define them as protoconsumer, pushing the industry instead of being pushed like in the past.

The consumer has reached a new step in its evolution where the need of objects as a property is giving way to new horizons where **changes the concept of private property**, the consumer values and at same time like the punctual need to **access to a service instead of the permanent acquisition of the property.**

Overall this is modifying the binomial nature of product / service, causing a consumer trend of the

rejection of the acquisition of the object in search of services that meet the same need, just in time.

Basically the world is changing and in this environment we have the chance to make something big, to find hidden gaps to develop new attitudes and possibilities going further from the traditional perspectives and assumptions. We have the power to define a new framework, with new rules: it is the emerging of the **anarchism of the object**, a design activism to channel the rejection trend of the object based on the reassessing of goods in search of new opportunities to maximize and reuse of resources. Anarchism of the object tries to turn the paradigm imposed temporarily by the producers, *the planned obsolescence*. It advocates for the opposition against the objects themselves, as they are understood today, and their system.

As Don Tapscott, Expert in business strategy through the Internet and World Economic Forum Member, said at the beginning of 2011 the following assumption in an interview "This is not a crisis, is a historic change" "Newspapers, universities, corporations, government, education, health systems, network, energy ... everything is based on models of the industrial era and are failing."

These statements are precisely the motivation for writing this article, making a retrospective study of

the effects caused by the industry trend and therefore the movements that have emerged from these effects, which has led the current situation. This presentation describes the historical regression resulting in the need to develop these new concepts, rooted in the pursuit of consumer activism in favor of finding new models and systems.

## HISTORY

### The industrial revolution

Occurred in mid-eighteenth century and nineteenth century, it was the beginning of a turning point, when it is said that the world suffered the largest collection of socio-economic, technological and cultural changes in history of mankind since Neolithic times. The economy based on manual labor gave way to new one dominated by industry and manufacturing.

The mechanization of industries and the development of processes of iron, as well as technological innovations (steam engine) favored huge increases in production capacity, shaping society until our days.

In 1769 Nicholas-Joseph Cugnot created the first steam-powered vehicle; it was a real tricycle with wooden wheels. Cugnot marked the beginning of a historic change, the possibility of movement driven by machines instead of animal traction.

In parallel in 1765, the "loom of Jenny" appeared, causing a revolution in the wool industry in England: 8 threads spun made a significant increase in production. It provided the chance to produce quicker and cheaper, due to the need of manpower decrease enormously.

During the s.XIX, inventors focused on develop technological solutions following with the improvement of the function of machines.

Invented in 1860 the first internal combustion engine by Etienne Lenoir, between 1885-86 Daimler and Benz patented their "vehicle with gas engine".

During the end of s.XIX and s.XX a new understanding of society spread a new understanding of society, based on productivity and acquisition. Parameterizing the activities and actions in pragmatic models and methodologies, born of heuristic learning that allowed creating sequences and processes that apply to homogeneous problems and projects.

With the introduction and development of assembly line techniques in the car, 1908 Ford T Henry Ford revolutionized car production. These techniques were rapidly introduced in other areas of the industry, like in the textile manufacturers.

Consecutively, mass production required mass sales, and U.S. manufacturers of the 1920s were quick to recognize the potential of industrial design. Then, it started a big focus on the product, trying to achieve the better **functional benefits** as well as their improvement to be produced in series to maximize the use of the machines. The

industry was in a time where the acquisition or developments of new technologies were an advantage in front of their competitors; it was the pillar of innovation.



### **Emergence of consumerism**

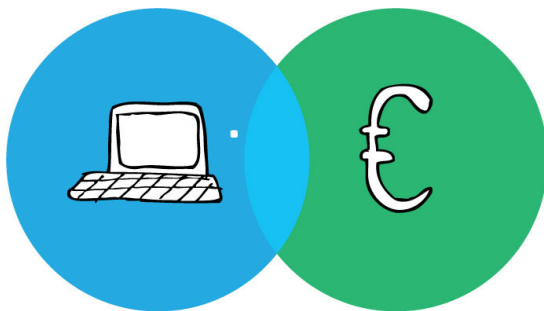
According to Bell (1976), mass consumption was made possible by technological advances that made available to the market certain "star" products at affordable prices (especially for the application of electricity to household chores, the appearance of appliances) and three social inventions of particular importance: appeared mass production, marketing development and dissemination of installment buying.

With the development of the industry appeared the mass production, amounts of product prepared to be delivered. Product collapse resulted in the shift from products to buyers that the group was to consume or use. Product collapse resulted in the redirection of products towards the group of buyers that was going to consume or use, it is the starting of market. The increase of the economy and the access to goods defined under the user's profile produced that the action of buying disseminated between the society. Covered the main necessity, it started to buy to buy, and at the end of the path, the

consumerism emerged as a result.

Consumerism refers to the build, purchase or consumption of goods and services considered nonessential. Understood as the purchase or shopping spree, idealizes its effects and consequences associated with their practice of obtaining personal satisfaction and even personal happiness.

The word comes from Latin consumerism "consumere" which means spending or destroy and word-ism ismus Latin and Greek East ισμος (-ism), suffix forming nouns of action from verbs and describes a trend now innovative, especially in the thought and art.



Here appears the second pillar of innovation: business (like representation of money). As well as something was developed, it was thought to be oriented to certain group of people with similar characteristics, defines as a "market". The appearance of marketing development and the new orientation of goods brought associated the use of design like the tool to develop iconic products and brands, focusing on emotional benefits.

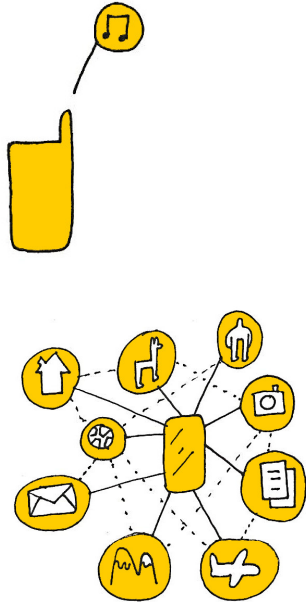
This context developed during the second half of the twentieth century the stratification of society

into groups with a particular idiosyncrasy in relation to their consumption patterns, but all with the acquisition of property and obtaining comfort as a goal. Its consequence is the development of new habits and social stigmas associated with products like the automobile as a sign to mark the transition from adolescence to adulthood: **adolescence is left behind when you have a car.**

### **Beginning of the Services**

The evolution of the reality of the product, coupled with progress toward a new complexity of society and the user gave as a result a new framework, a change from tangible reality to the inclusion of intangible values that define the real differentiation between them. Margolin (1995) calls this "product environment", defined as consisting of "all necessary conditions to acquire of a product, to learn to use it, to track its changes and improvements, to provide components and to stay healthy."

The concept released today that designates this fact is the Product-Service System (PSS), defined as "a range of products and services which together satisfy a need." (Morelli, 2001). In this definition, the product is the mainstay, with the service as a complement to it, providing greater utility to the consumer (service and object have the same reality, the service is developed to sell better).



The result is that both, product and service have to be designed; it means to be thought to answer the need of the consumer. Quoting Charles Eames in the early twentieth century, "the boundaries of design are the limits of the problems," this opens a new opportunity for the world of design that includes a change in the mindset of concept the product from an isolated perspective to a context of relations and interactions.

In a complex setting like this, cases from companies such as Nokia are a reflection of need for change and a new understanding of the market:

"We have some brilliant sources of innovation inside Nokia, But We Are Not Bringing It to market fast enough. Meego We Thought Would Be a platform for winning high-end smartphones. However, At This Rate, by the end of 2011, we Might Have only one product in the market Meego. "

Nokia CEO Stephen Elop

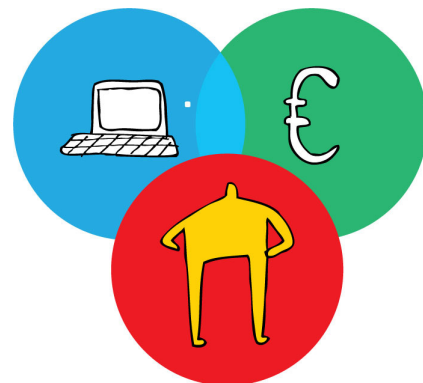
As Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple at the time, says **"Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works"** Definitely design is able to face a new challenge.

Summing up, there is a need for new disciplines that give shelter to appropriate tools to navigate the tumultuous world, a world defined colloquially as "we live in Beta." It is the beginning of Service Design discipline.

There are two main design objectives of services (Viladàs, 2010):

- Application to increase the productivity of services in an a merely commercial effort.
- Application to the problems of collective type, in which design is sometimes called "social" or "public" and rely on co-creation for the common good through sustainable solutions in a broad sense.

While the initial acceptance can be understood as a cross between industrial productivity and the tertiary sector, the second is key to the development of new processes and methodologies.



It is the natural evolution of designing FOR people to designing WITH people that involves connecting with the user, creating empathy with them and collaborating together to understand the real needs of them to figure out not only the surface of the problem, but explore the reasons and the context surrounded. Design acquire and holistic point of view which tries to go beyond the material, functional and aesthetics of the products to understand the context to be able to create links between them and the people oriented to the creation of experiences.

### **Cradle to Cradle and the appearance Degrowth Movement**

In parallel with the development of the industry and its economic model, there have been critics and activists who have tried to raise his voice defending the dangers of excessive growth, as well as trying to establish tools, patterns of thought, methodologies, disciplines ... concerned about the ecological footprint and environmental impact.

Nowadays, population is starting to have certain sense about the topic, mainly trying to understand the principals of environmentalism (Socio-political movement which advocates the protection of nature and harmony between this and progress.). People start to be concerned about the consumption of goods and the impact of them, but still it is a lightly sense of guilty which most times does not bring action. Traditionally the main slogan of environmentalism is "Reduce, reuse,

recycle." Society is focuses on recycle, try to reuse but is not affiliated with the term of reduce.

In this context, Michael Braungart y William McDonough wrote in 2005 the book "Cradle to Cradle: Redesigning the way we do things", the presentation of a new way to face the design and development of a product-service proposing "change of focus".

Reducing the impact on the environment would cause a slowdown of the same, but faster or slower we are reaching the same end. Therefore, the authors propose that it is necessary to tackle the problem at its roots, focusing on one's conceptualization of product, taking into account all the phases involved in its life cycle (extraction, processing, use, reuse, recycling ...) so that not even necessary energy costs, including the balance of expenditures and contributions is positive.

The key concepts of the philosophy of "cradle to cradle" are intuitive and rooted in the imitation of nature, or more precisely the connection with it by developing a methodology that tries to shut the system down in a circle around the product , designing the least impact and maximizing resources in their entire existence.

Again, it is possible to appreciate the holistic perspective of thought given to the design, as a discipline able to face the compression of a system and to project the redefinition of it.

Besides the proposed... (...) others, and it properly appeared...

Besides the proposed active concepts, it is possible to find radical concepts such as Degrowth Movement. The contemporary concept can trace its roots back to the anti-industrialist trends of the 19th century, developed in Great Britain by John Ruskin, William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement (1819–1900) between others, and it properly appeared during the 1970s, proposed by the Club of Rome think tank. However it was in 2003 when the term acquired special significance thanks to Serge Latouche, French economist, famous ideologue and advocate of the decrease. That year he published an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, where defines decrease as “a necessity, not a principle, an ideal, neither sole objective of a society of post-development and other possible world. The slogan of the decrease is particularly aimed to mark with power the abandonment of foolish goal growth for growth” due to “(...) Such a society is not sustainable because it meets the limits of the biosphere.”

However, it could be misunderstood, decrease is not negative growth, it means “(...) literally have to leave the economy. This means challenging the hegemony of the economy on the rest of life in theory and in practice, but mostly in our heads.”

The decrease represents a change in the values of society. To synthesize a program is necessary to reflect on six objectives, the six 'R' (Latouche 2003):

- Reassess, i.e. review the values that guide our lives and change those should be changed.

- Restructure, adapt the system to the current situation.
- Redistribute, the distribution of wealth and access to natural heritage.
- Reduce, lessening the impact on the planet in our ways of producing and consuming.
- Reuse rather than discard.
- Recycle wastes of our activity.

Basically, at the individual level, degrowth is achieved by voluntary simplicity. It means that anyone has the right to follow these new values or not, but anyway, as collective or as unit everyone needs to be aware of them due to they are going to be the trend in the upcoming future.

### **PRESENT INTERPRETATION**

At face value it is possible to assert that it is starting to arise a change in the mindset of society, or what is the same as the population and ultimately the individual. People are becoming contextualized, it means they begin to be awareness of their context, creating a self-knowledge and therefore developing new relations with it.

The thread of history brings us to the present time, a time of economic recession where unexplored possibilities open to us. Basically it is necessary to break with the tradition and the actual system, in a search of a new way of understanding the context according to the actual cultural change and the thrust of the people.

On the hand we find a transition from a consumerism attitude to a service demand, we find ourselves entering the era of "**Rejection of the Object**": Objects are static, materialized, while otherwise, the ideas on which they rely not have a tangible reality(mobility, relax,fun..), which gives us a very valid business tool.

It results the emergence and exponential growth of the discipline of service design focused on planning and design services, which leads to an ever-increasing use of various models of co-creation, understood as the development of group projects, and the introduction of the consumer in previous phases of the process, two different meanings, and intimately linked.

On the other hand people start to be concerned about the problems of growth and the impact of the human footprint, developing a guilty conscience. Determined from an individual perspective anyone has the right to be active or not, but anyway, plans and developments have to be inclusive about new attitudes, politics and actions which ensure the protection and respect of the environment.

In parallel we discover the revival of Design as a philosophy to understand the reality, in fact, and the holistic approach to define it. It means, it is a creative process to create suitable stories, and it is ultimately a response to a complex world like this, maybe not the best but one that is responding

properly.

Therefore, Design has the chance to generate a change support by the concepts previously seen. Framed in the philosophy of degrowth, it is possible to create a reflection of the products in use, of the life statement and isolate spaces of action, translating the material into the idea behind those who defend a need to transform into something. It means, identify the value of the interaction between user and product to postprocess the information in the creation of new services, creating opportunities and new solutions.

We could frame this Design Activism as "**Anarchism of the object**".

It may seem unheard of complex application; we are talking about something that is happening so nascent.

Under the label of disruptive innovation (something that breaks the rules, unexpected) it is possible to find a great example: **Zipcar**, as they explain "Car Sharing, an alternative to car rental and car ownership"

Joined the problems of traffic in cities with the environmental responsibility and the change of icons of status, a decrease of the use of the car is happening, and also a decrease of the need of having one in property. Understanding this context, Zipcar propose an answer to the punctual need of transporting objects, long distances...

going further from ownership and rental systems.  
You share a car the time you need.

Besides the principals established, in this new framework, it should consider the application of Cradle to Cradle: Changing the products into ideas that are worked using Service Design, but also it is necessary to take notice of all the cycle of life of the service.

**Interfaceflor** is the proof that everything written up here is possible. Founded in 1973 to answer the need for coating the floors of the offices of the moment, in the mid 1990's, its founder decided to completely change the strategy of the company, redefining industrial methods to prioritize sustainability.

Basically Interflor's main business model has become in a provider of a service: they rent you the carpet, and they provide the cleaning of it, and if it is impossible to clean or is damaged, they changed the tiles. The system of construction allows them to do it, based on the use of colours and irregular shapes. Furthermore, being the owner of the carpet, when the life comes to the end, they recover the tiles and introduce again in their manufacturing process.

Nowadays they are a great example to study which has driven them to create a consultancy InterfaceRAISE.

Summing up, the whole article has tried to show the evolution of different perspectives into the

objects until the actual moment. Embedded in a time of recession, in a time of change, in the new century paradigms... the economy faces a new framework that provides the chance to make things different. Thus, this new era requires as a natural evolution of new methods, and tools, in fact it is time to understand the product as a means, not as an end.

In this context appears the concept of "**Anarchism of the object**", a design activism built under the principals of Degrowth Movement inside the discipline of Design focused on Service Design, taking notice the philosophy of "cradle to cradle". It advocates for the opposition against the objects themselves, as they are understood today, and their system.

Great designer Karl Gerstner said "***Design must not be understood as an activity reserved to artists. It is the privilege of all people everywhere.***" Building up from that, this paper puts forward one key idea: it is necessary to face the world in another way, with another mood, and with other skills.

## **FUTURE VISION**

Once upon a time, there was a figure in companies whose competence was being the chief of the human resources, controlling all the movements that the brand made. He or she had to lead all the small ants like one big machine, with the main task of improving, improving and improving, in a continuous process without a goal

beyond having more benefits. This main figure was like a king, all made the best to keep him/her safe, and whatever were the orders from him/her, and population will follow without questioning anything. It was the company of the XX century, and the orchestra director was the CEO of it, iron-fist Director's Company focused on day to day.

During long decades, it was the rule inside the companies. At the end of the nineties and the first decade of XXI century, a movement inside big brands appears. Suddenly, the crisis started to appear, they realized that the system would not survive a long time, they were aware that ants were more than simple individuals who had a right position in its machinery. Basically, they understood that the human resources pushing from below were the most powerful tool they had.

Inspired by the study "Innovation as a Learning Process: Embedding Design Thinking" by S. L. Beckman, M. Barry, who defines design as a process of "Story Telling" where we define the known, to develop the future, to redefine the story with our solution implicit on it, it is possible to imagine a new role of the CEO.

Hopefully, economy will have learned a lot from the ancestors, it will have suffered a big evolution that will lead us to develop new skills, to understand the work environment from another perspective.

Companies will build in different cellars of multidisciplinary teams, with a close connection between them. Human needs will be over all the issues, the individual in relation with more individuals are the engine of the brand, and like a classic car engine, it will have to take care of all the parts of the system.

How could one take care of such an environment?

The Storyteller, a man or woman uncharged to think about the possible ways that the company could lead and is able to share with their team, exchanging information, pushing a decision after listening all of them, but providing enough space to changes due to specific needs.

As a father reads a book to his son to give him some inputs or knowledge, and after having internalized it, the child should apply it in the right way with the parental control; in that perspective, the storyteller will be uncharged of describing the possible scenarios to their team, and the group of people will lead the company to the right one with the storyteller control.

This leader who supports the company showing the future way to take the daily decisions will be the new figure of the CEO. Its main task is to create the story line of the brand, attending to all the plausible scenarios to have the enough information to take decision in a collaborative mood.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**The role of design in the development of technology-based services**

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