Participatory design

Readings in PhD Course DF21800
Qualitative research methods

Presented by:
Erik Sundvall
erik.sundvall@liu.se
http://www.imt.liu.se/~erisu/

Department of Biomedical Engineering
Linköping University, Sweden
**Abstract**

This article attempts to shed historical light on some of the social, political, and ethical issues that have arisen from two disparate perspectives on technology which have both come to integrate an explicit consideration of social factors into systems design. It presents two distinct historical traditions which have contributed to the current field of participatory design methodologies—Joint Application Design (JAD), and the British "socio-technical systems" and Scandinavian "collective resources" approaches—and which in practice integrated the end-users in different ways consequent upon their differing perspectives on workers, professional relationships to technology, and stated goals. One interest in examining the independent development of methodologies from these two perspectives is that, despite their differences, the approaches ultimately converged on a set of shared concerns and very similar practices.

The paper also examines the relation of these traditions to transformations in the theorization of business organization and trends of corporate restructuring which helped to secure a place for variants of related methodologies in major US and multinational corporations. It concludes with an examination of some broader issues in the relationship between technology and society and the prospects for the critical study of technology. I argue that participatory design and its related methodologies are best understood as a model for involving users, designers, and the technology itself in a process of technological development. Rather than seeing participatory design as merely the insertion of public dialog within technological design practices, as several observers have done, we should see it as a model for the critical practice of developing technological designs.

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**2000**

Transforming society by transforming technology: the science and politics of participatory design

Peter M. Asaro

Department of Philosophy and Computer Science, Beckman Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 711 Behavior Lab, 617 S Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801, USA

**E-mail address:** asaro@uiuc.edu (P.M. Asaro).

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**1981-86 UTOPIA**

1990 first PD Conf, Seattle

1993 book -->
- context
- principles/issues
- approaches to PD
- case studies
Context

- Horrifying examples (especially ch 1)
  - Bad routines & software
  - Stress, extreme surveillance/spying statistik (telemarketing)

- Taylorism, de-skilling
  - Top-down $\Rightarrow$ give workers chance to reorganize work
  - Automate $\Rightarrow$ give workers better tools

- US trade unions mostly negotiate wages, use democracy arguments for participation instead (later: efficiency, quality, pragmatism)

- Need to realize that technology is socially determined, can be redesigned

- Power shift:
  - participation $\neq$ decision making (c.f. JAD, "hostage")
  - specialists must learn to trust expertise of workers
Socio-technical systems

- Scandinavian politics ≠ UK
- Studied group dynamics
  - leaderless groups
  - mining shafts, military...
  - Work organisation; "organic" open relationship betw. workers & technology
  - ...
- Criticized by "scandinavians"

Collective resources

- Empower working class
- Trade unions
  - have power to change work cond.
  - Get informed of & negotiate new technology
- First gen: not involved in design. Failed?
- UTOPIA - early modern PD?
JAD

- Reduce time in system development life cycle
- Structured meetings with users. Building blocks
  - Facilitators - leader(s)
  - Agenda/structure
  - Documentation (scribe)
  - "Group dynamics"
    - Inspire creativity (brainstorm) - NyT
    - conflict resolution
    - "one conversation at a time"
- Promote experts, extract knowledge, "sell" system.
  - graphical tools - "Sign off"

Xerox: Engineering Codevelopment

- Customer centered!
- Engineers + prototypes in end user environment
  - Tune artefact to environment…
  - Changed engineer work practices + improved skills
  - "committed to helping users in a personal way"
- Not all needs can be formalised (by e.g. market research methods)
- Members "floating" among tasks and leadership roles - initiative/experience
Common findings:
- Impossible to formalize skill & working knowledge fully (Ehn: Wittgenstein word games)
- Prototyping etc helps communication & understanding

Barriers
- I know nothing...
- Expert authority threatened
- Fixed contract/scope (LOU?)
- Ch 6 - obstacles (p 106…)

Anthropology (natural settings, holism, descriptive)
- similar issues & techniques (Observe, interview, record)
- observer participant - participant observer
- Focus? Event - Person - Place - Object
- Colonialism?
Thoughts

 Democratizing Innovation

- "Users, aided by improvements in [...] technology, increasingly can develop their own new products and services. These innovating users [...] often freely share their innovations with others, creating user-innovation communities and a rich intellectual commons.

 Healthcare

- Many users of the same data. Data modeling and user experience modeling separate and related?
- Excessive process modeling? Quality registers in unforeseen roles. (See Läkartidningen)

 Project? - AIV prototyping overviews? Balance:

- Observe, listen, interview
- Evoke by showing possibilities
- Conserve vs. change (...better horse...)

LiU