Call for Papers

Distributed PD: Challenges and Opportunities

Special issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems

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Theme

This Special Issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems invites submissions addressing the challenges and opportunities of conducting Participatory Design (PD) in distributed projects, here referred to as Distributed PD.

One of the most important contributions of Scandinavian researchers to Information Systems is PD. For a considerable amount of time the importance and usefulness of the approach has been illustrated during the design of computer systems for work (cf. Bjerknes, Ehn and Kyng, 1987; Greenbaum & Kyng, 1991; Schuler and Namioka, 1993; Kyng, 1998; Bødker, Kensing and Simonsen, 2004). The approach focuses on the relationship between designers and users, as well as the involvement of users in the design process itself. PD approaches aim at decreasing the physical and professional distance of users and designers, so that designers can participate in the users' world and users can directly participate in design activities (Muller et al. 1993). Similar notions of user involvement can be found in user-centered design, ethnography and contextual design (Kujala 2003). Within PD, focus groups and workshops are commonly used, where designers and users meet and jointly work with prototypes, mock-ups and/or scenarios. These meetings provide the opportunity to engage in hands on activities, resolving conflicts and specifying design issues (Kensing, 2003).

Originally, PD was developed with a focus on co-located design activities, where the users and designers meet face-to-face in order to establish some common ground. As such, PD becomes challenging in projects that involve a large number of users and stakeholders, who may be distributed across space, time and organizational structures.

Some research in the field of Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) has considered how to support such distributed projects. Although little research in the CSCW community has explicitly focused on PD, the two communities could benefit from each other (Kensing and

Blomberg, 1998). For example, researchers in the area of CSCW have studied how to effectively facilitate communication and knowledge sharing. However, the focus here lies on the software for collaborative work rather than supporting participatory design approaches across spatial, temporal and organizational distances. Moreover, PD does not necessarily argue for, or include, computers in order to support group work during design (Bannon, 1993). In addition to this, the area of distributed software development (DSD) provides research on communication and coordination in (globally) distributed software development (e.g. Heeks et al. 2001; Bhat et al. 2006; Ò Conchúir et al. 2006; O'Leary et al. 2007). Yet, such research lacks consideration of participation between stakeholders. Today, the number of complex web-based information systems is increasing, which brings new challenges. For example, a possible breakdown of division of labor between new types of distributed specialists entering the design process (Bødker & Carstensen, 2004).

PD is undeniably challenged by distributed project settings, although PD has already been applied in distributed projects (cf. presented work at the workshops on DPD at NordiCHI 2006 and at CHI 2008, or Farshchian & Divitini, 1999). This Special Issue recognizes and promotes the relevance of PD in distributed project settings. The objective of the Special Issue is to unify the successes and failures of processes, methods and tools used to facilitate PD in distributed settings.

Recommended topics for papers to be included in this Special Issue include, but are not limited to:

Tools to enable direct user participation.

Methods and processes to enable direct user participation.

Methods, processes, tools to study distributed PD.

Evaluation of distributed PD processes and methods.

Evaluation of PD approaches for distributed contexts.

Methodological considerations for studying DPD.

Theoretical research on distributed PD.

Principals and issues.

Case studies of distributed PD.

Distributed PD in different application domains.

The submissions should follow the guidelines of the general-level SJIS submissions: http://www.e-sjis.org/authors/submission.htm and be submitted to matti.rossi@hse.fi

Address that your submission is targeted to the special issue.

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