

User participation has been a central topic for decades, but it is about time to revisit it because the previous findings might not fit the new IS contexts we face today (Markus & Mao 2004ⁱ). Outsourcing or purchasing of off-the-shelf software has isolated users from developers. Problems are also introduced with web-based and mobile solutions with large and geographically scattered user bases. In addition, systems may nowadays be designed for consumers, who may use them during domestic life and leisure activities. Selecting and contacting these users may be challenging. The user population has also widened to include new groups of people with varying ages, education, and interests (e.g. children, Druin 2002). Furthermore, new development approaches, such as open source and end-user software development require reconsidering the concept of user participation (e.g. Barcellini et al. 2008, Syrjänen 2007). Another recent trend has been to hire or rely on different kinds of intermediaries to ‘represent the users’ in the development process (Cooper & Bowers 1995): e.g. usability or user-centered/interaction/user experience design specialists, ethnographers or change agents (e.g. Iivari et al. 2009, Karasti 2001, Markus & Mao 2004).

It has also been acknowledged that there are many controversies and ambiguities in the literature regarding what is meant by user participation or user centeredness. Usability engineering, user-centered design, interaction design and user experience design are recent approaches for ensuring user focus. Generally, there is a multitude of approaches to rely on, and clear differences related to both the motives and the practical means suggested (e.g. Iivari & Iivari, in press). The motives may range from achieving workplace democracy to work intensification and profit maximization (e.g. Asaro 2000, Spinuzzi 2002). The users may be allowed to have decision-making power regarding solutions, but they may also be permitted only to provide background information or feedback to the already-made decisions (e.g. Damodaran 1996, Iivari 2006, Keinonen 2009).

This special issue aims to attract conceptual, theoretical and empirical papers, with a focus on reconceptualizing user participation/centeredness, on understanding the challenges and opportunities of these new IS contexts or on ways of enhancing and fostering user participation/centeredness in these contexts, for example:

- User-centered design/user participation in outsourced/offshore/application package based IS development
- IS development for/with groups with special needs (for instance, children or the elderly)
- IS development for users with disparate skill levels
- Practices and challenges involved with ‘representing the users’ in IS development
- User-centered design/user participation in open source software development
- User-centered design/user participation and end user development
- The role/importance of intermediaries in user-centered design/user participation
- User-centered design/user participation in mobile/web-based/ubiquitous environments

Information for Authors

Please see the THCI website (<http://aisel.aisnet.org/thci/>) for more information. For information about manuscript preparation, see (<http://aisel.aisnet.org/thci/authorinfo.html>). For information about the review process, see (<http://aisel.aisnet.org/thci/policy.html>). All submissions should be made through the THCI manuscript review system (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/thci>).

Important Dates

- 2010/10/31: Deadline for Submissions
- 2011/01/31: Review Results to Authors
- 2011/04/30: Deadline for Revisions
- 2011/08/31: Final Decisions
- 2012: Publishing the Special Issue

Co-Editors

Netta Iivari, Department of Information Processing Science, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland, Email: netta.iivari@oulu.fi
Horst Treiblmaier, Department of Management Information Systems, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria, Email: Horst.Treiblmaier@wu.ac.at
Dennis Galletta, University of Pittsburgh, Katz Graduate School of Business, Pittsburg, USA, Email: galletta@katz.pitt.edu

ⁱ The list of references can be found at: <http://www.tol.oulu.fi/index.php?id=881>