Unfolding Participation over Time in the Design of IT

The aim of this special issue is to continue and contribute to the debate around the conceptualizations and understandings of participation in Participatory Design (PD) and related areas of human-computer interaction (HCI) research, recently invigorated by Vines et al. (2015), Halskov and Hansen (2015) and Saad-Sulonen et al. (2015). Ongoing transformations in IT mediated participation in contemporary societies are challenging us to explore the changing nature of participation in IT design. Some of the questions that emerge relate to the need to rethink notions and practices of participation as they relate to temporality. We are now seeing a multitude of PD research and practice that range in temporal scale, from single projects taking place at one point in time to connected and hard to delineate projects that occur over years. Researchers are starting to acknowledge the significance of PD work that occurs in the background and in-between the typically reported on design activities conducted with participants. Furthermore, we've seen recent discussions emerge around the ways activities conducted both prior and after the typical project time of PD can impact and influence research and practice; from shaping eventual outcomes based on decisions made prior to involving participants in design, to considering the long-term sustainability, scalability and transferability of outcomes and learnings. As such, the temporal dimensions of PD are expanding greatly both conceptually and in practice. Our special issue aims to address these emerging areas of interest in PD.

Authors of this special issue were invited to consider, but were not limited to, the following issues:

- What kinds of new participatory configurations are emerging in contemporary settings?

- What temporalities and scales are associated with new participatory configurations?

- How can we map, analyze and reflect on how contemporary participation is unfolding over time?

- In what ways do contemporary participatory configurations and their unfolding over time relate to the original values of participatory design (e.g. democracy, quality of working life, alternatives, and politics)?

- How can we account for the diversity of participants, including large and diverse groups of users, but also designers and researchers as participants, in the unfolding design practices over time?

In our own contribution, we aim to shed some light on ways in which researchers examine the relationships between participation and time in their work, based on previous literature and the articles in this special issue. We do this by building an overview of two shared temporalities in PD, namely the future-orientation and project-based temporality. We then introduce five lenses for understanding the unfolding of participation in the design of IT. The phasic lens relates to the different phases or cycles of participatory activities, how they change over time, and often infer different modes and qualities of participation. The emergent lens pays attention to participation as an in the moment, continuously unfolding phenomenon entangled with other ongoing activities. The retrospective lens refers to examples where retrospection

can help understand how participation changed and is altered over the time of a project. The prospective lens takes PD's future-orientation beyond the concerns for future use. Finally, the long-term lens enables a stretched view of participation, taking into account both the past and the future while balancing between them in the present. In the article, we exemplify the five lenses by highlighting them in the four other articles included in the special issue, and finally discuss existing challenges and future directions for research.

The discussion on temporalities of participation in design is apparent in the four other articles in this special issue. Huybrechts, Hendriks, Yndigegn and Malmborg propose three types of scripts to support the design of participation over time in community contexts, focusing in supporting community participation and action after the PD project ends. Scripting here refers to the creation of descriptive reports of human and non-human relations, a process that allows for the articulation of the voices of multiple actors and their different timelines. Righi, Sayago, Rosales, Ferreira, and Blat report from their long-term engagement with older learners, reflecting on the ways in which multiple projects intersected with one-another and the ways in which supposedly insignificant modes of participation were perhaps the most influential and impactful for participants in the long term. They argue for the need to legitimize forms of participation not related to project goals. Poderi, Bettega, Cappaccioli, and D'Andrea introduce the term "interaction space", a conceptual tool to help understand and map relatively stable participatory configurations. In the paper the authors demonstrate how the interaction space framework enables researchers to map out and reflect on the unfolding participatory configurations in their project, visualizing the temporal and spatial distribution of design activities and how they related to different participants input into their project. Finally, Kraff presents a tool for reflection on participant

diversity and changeability over time and relations between different participant groups. The tool can help to visualize how decisions taken in the project may affect participant groups' situations, and can be used also for long-term reflection on relations of multiple groups of participants.

In summary, this special issue explores some initial ways in which PD researchers may examine and articulate the temporal dimensions of participation in their research, and connect these with the concrete examples of the papers in this special issue. While the articles exemplify work from diverse areas of the field of PD, they propose concrete approaches and challenges in the unfolding of participation over time in the design of IT. In the concluding section of our editorial article, we reflect on these future opportunities and challenges, focusing on how we conceptualize participation and most importantly how we as a field might reflect on and develop our understandings of time in PD.

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