PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Design, and has the perspective of the IT designer in charge of designing and implementing IT-based solutions in organizations. Jesper Simonsen will introduce this discipline to us from its approaches, principles, development, etc. in a practical and easy-understanding way.

- Participatory design presents a design approach distinct from conventional approaches, which actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., designers, developers, and users), with a mission to ensure that the products or systems genuinely realize the effects that users require. Participatory Design is applied in various design fields, especially in information technology system development and design. It is centered on the true participation of all stakeholders in the design process, enabling users to articulate their needs and influence the outcome of design.

- Participatory Design Conference is a bi-annual event dedicated to exploring the researches in this discipline since 1990. PDC brings together a multidisciplinary and international group of software developers, researchers, social scientists, managers, designers, practitioners, users, cultural workers, activists, and citizens who both advocate and adopt participatory approaches to exchange their ideas in this discipline. The central concern is to understand how collaborative design processes can be driven by the participation of the people affected by the technology designed. This year's PDC will be held in Denmark on August 12—16th, with the theme of Embracing New Territories of Participation.

We invite Professor Jesper Simonsen, the General Chair of this year's PDC, also a long-time researcher in related fields to talk about Participatory Design. Professor Jesper Simonsen's researches are practice-oriented, rooted in Participatory Design.
Interview with Jesper Simonsen

- *360*° Is there a widely-recognised definition of Participatory Design? Could you please give us a practical snapshot of what it is about?

   I have just finished editing a new International Handbook on Participatory Design that will be published in August 2012 (Simonsen and Robertson, 2012). In this book, we introduce Participatory Design with the following definition (Robertson and Simonsen, 2012): In essence, Participatory Design can be defined as a process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective 'reflection-in-action' (Brown 1983).

   The participants typically undertake the two principal roles of users and designers where the designers strive to learn the realities of the users’ situation while the users strive to articulate their desires and aims and appropriate technological means to obtain them.

   Put it simple, Participatory Design embraces a diverse collection of principles, and practices aimed at making technologies, tools, environments, businesses, and social institutions more responsive to human needs. It brings together a multidisciplinary and international group of software developers, researchers, social scientists, managers, designers, practitioners, users, cultural workers, activists, and citizens who both advocate and adopt distinctively participatory approaches in the development of new artefacts, communication artefacts and systems, services, and technology.

   Participatory Design has so much to offer to those living and working in environments where technologies are designed and used. Some of the most obvious examples include: clarifying design goals, formulating needs, designing coherent visions for change, combining business-oriented and socially sensitive approaches, initiating participation and partnerships with different stakeholders, using ethnographic analysis as part of the design process, establishing mutual learning processes among heterogeneous participants, conducting iterative experiments aiming at organizational change, managing stepwise implementation based on comprehensive evaluations, and providing a large toolbox of different practical techniques to encourage active and genuine participation.

   Most importantly, its defining commitment to ensuring active and genuine participation offers a principled design approach and practice to those seeking to harness the benefits of new technology for a greater good.

- *360*° Is the word “participatory” the same as “cooperative”?

   No! And “participatory” is also more than just “involvement.” We stress a special human essence which we sometimes also underscore as “genuine participation” (Robertson and Simonsen, 2012): By ‘genuine participation’, we refer to the fundamental transcendence of the users’ role from being merely informants to being legitimate and acknowledged participants in the design process. This role is established – for example – when users are not just answering questions in an interview about their point of view or knowledge of a particular issue, but are asked to step up, take the pen in hand, stand in front of the large whiteboard together with fellow colleagues and designers, and participate in drawing and sketching how the work process unfolds as seen from their perspectives. Inviting users to such collective discussions and reflections requires a trustful and convincing relationship between all participants. Any user needs to participate willingly as a way of working both as themselves (respecting their individual and group’s/community’s genuine interests) and with themselves (being concentrated present in order to sense how they feel about an issue, being open towards reflections on their own opinions) as well as for the task and the project (contributing to the achievement of the shared and agreed upon goals of the design task and design project at hand) (Storm Jensen 2002). Such participation demands acknowledgment of the users’ interests as fully legitimate elements of the design process. It includes addressing questions such as: what participation means in terms of actual power to make decisions; who needs to participate and how this can be managed and supported; how can the design process be itself designed so people can participate in it; and what kinds of design tools and methods do we need?

- *360*° You are doing a research called eDFIT Program, could you please share your opinions on how to enable the users to influence or decide the effect of the system?

   EDIT is a Participatory Design research program on Effects-driven IT development (Hertzmeyer and Simonsen, 2010).

   Effects-driven IT development entails a sustained focus on the effects to be achieved by users through their adoption and use of a system. The overall idea is that specification and formative evaluation of the effects desired from a system will provide users and developers – customer and vendor – with a means for working systematically with the design and organizational implementation of the system.

   Effects-driven IT development supports the management of a sustained Participatory Design process throughout design and organizational implementation. The focus is on the effects to be achieved by users through their adoption and use of a system, where we: (a) specify the purpose of a system as effects that are both measurable and meaningful to the users, and (b) evaluate the absence or presence of these effects during real use of the system. Effects are formulated in a user-oriented...
terminology, and they can be evaluated and revised with users in an iterative and incremental systems-development process that involves pilot implementations.

- "We are the general chair of this year's Participatory Design Conference, the theme this year is Embracing the New Territories in Participation. What are the new territories?
- JS: Participatory Design was rooted in a focus on involving people in the introduction of technology into their work. Today new territories embrace designing for everyday life and innovation in everyday practices including e.g. social networking services, various technologies for mobility and Community-based Participatory Design (Bissalvo et al., 2012).
- New territories for Participatory Design finally include how new 'Do-it-yourself' technologies change the way we perceive the end-user in the design process and the availability of open source software and hardware tools kits such as electronics prototyping platform enable people to produce their own applications, and thereby extend the design process into use. That end-users become designers whereby dissolves the boundaries between use and designing, and challenges our general understanding of users as participants in the design process.
- JS: What researches this year do you favor? Or what researches is this year's PDC exploring?
- JS: I favor researches that truly commit to the Participatory Design. The Participatory Design community constitutes a research community with a unique and special quality: It acknowledges that what you succeed in doing as a researcher has valuable meaning for yourself and for society as a whole, and further that you inevitably have to take responsibility for your professional work as a researcher and take a stand for your views within the community and society within which you work.
- Core areas of studies within Participatory Design include:
  - Methods, tools and techniques for how to do Participatory Design.
  - The commitments and guiding principles of ethnography and Participatory Design, including ethnographic methods and their relation to design.
  - The ethics of Participatory Design. Participatory Design is exceptional as an international community of researchers and practitioners who expect, and are expected to, engage in the ethics of their practice and who take that engagement very seriously.
  - Studies of how Participatory Design continually re-invent itself to face the changing political, economic, social, and technological environments.
- Jesper Simonsen: General Chair of The Participatory Design Conference