



PDC 2002 **Proceedings of the** **Participatory Design Conference**

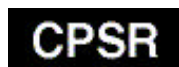
Malmö, Sweden
23-25 June 2002

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PDC 2002 is Sponsored by Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR),
in cooperation with the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Sveriges
Tvärvetenskapliga intresseförening För Människa-Datorinteraktion (STIMDI) and the International
Federation of Information Processing (IFIP) WG9.1

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CPSR ISBN 0-9667818-2-1

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Cover Design by Isabel Hardemo

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Introduction to the Proceedings of PDC 2002 the seventh biennial Participatory Design Conference

Since 1990, the Participatory Design Conferences have brought together researchers and practitioners from a variety of disciplines and work traditions, probing the social scope and practices of design of technology. A core concern has been to understand how collaborative design processes can be based on participation of the people affected by the technology designed.

The involvement of users and the focus on human-centered design, addressing the design of technology 'through the interface', were pioneered by contributions to the Participatory Design Conferences. Debates within the participatory design community have contributed to the development of a new IT design field emphasizing simultaneously the need for thorough studies of the context of use, the relevance of an open and participatory design process, and concern for the political aspects of the technology in use.

Today the collaborative nature of the design process and the need to involve a large variety of stakeholders has gained wider acceptance. At the same time a fundamental uncertainty concerning the scope and directions for the design of technology has created a growing interest in innovative approaches to participation and design.

With the theme *Participation and Design*, the Participatory Design Conference 2002 invited researchers, designers and other practitioners to present *inquiries into the politics, contexts and practices of collaborative design work*. We invited contributions from all design fields such as architecture, urban planning, engineering, interaction design and others (such as the fine arts) with a focus on understanding collaborative design work. The contributions assembled in these proceedings reflect this invitation.

With John Habraken and Barbara Holub two accomplished speakers from the fields of architecture and art have been invited as sources of inspiration for the debates about participation and collaborative design practice.

John Harbraken is a well-known Dutch architect who worked for many years as a professor at MIT in Boston. In his recent book *The Structure of the Ordinary* (MIT press, 2000) he sums up his perspectives on the built environment as always open and evolving. He has had a lifetime commitment to the idea of participation, since the late 1950's and early 60's. Harbraken's perspectives are original and provocative, genuinely interested in enabling rather than in promoting an ideological or political position. Moreover, from the start, he has been thinking about how design and participation relate to one another, rather than promoting participation and accepting the outcome, whatever that might have been.

Barbara Holub from Austria works as an artist in-between urban planning and artistic interventions with a focus on communication in public spaces. She often sets her work in contexts outside the arts – inviting people into a staged garden fence situation, collaborating with employees in developing visual statements. Stimulating participation is an occasion for questioning the routines of everyday life, exploring memories, and transcending the roles of the individual within given contexts and functions of places. Barbara Holub, who also taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Art and Design, TU Wien, has developed a variety of methods of engaging actors, from interviews to games and performances.

The proceedings are structured in four parts: full papers, work-in-progress, workshops, and art/work exhibition. It is for the first time that a PD Conference invited submissions for an art/work strand, which exhibited artwork created as part of the research process. The focus on art as process, collaborative authorship and interactivity, in the computer aided, enhanced or generated context makes exhibitions such

as these of high relevance for designers. As in the arts in user-centered design process, the distinction between the designed artifact, the context of use, and the process of design may become blurred.

The themes of the academic work included in these proceedings comprise old and ongoing concerns as well as new ideas, coming from both inside and outside the PC community. Many contributions focus on methods and techniques, on how to develop design competence, involve and/or imagine users and contexts of use, examining the boundaries between design and use, discussing the roles of designers and/or participant observers in users' everyday activities or in the design process, addressing issues of power and politics.

While methods and techniques are an old topic within PD, there is an increasing diversity of methods being developed and practiced and some of them have been substantially elaborated. Also, the tradition of grounding one's research in fieldwork, ethnographic studies, and in inquiries on contexts of use has been both confirmed and strengthened. There is a shift of attention from old to relatively new contexts of use. The technologies and artifacts that are examined range from the future office to applications in health care, mobile technologies, and large distributed systems. Some of the papers explore the relationships between PD work and such varied fields as work design, engineering, interaction design, web design, product development, home services, curriculum design, architecture, and urban planning.

Although collaborative design practices are widespread there is still some way to go to better understand them on the one hand, to better connect them to political concerns with user participation and democracy on the other hand. The 'art of doing PD' continues challenging design practitioners of all kinds.

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PDC 2002 gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organizations:

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