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Framing and Facilitating Participatory Design for Greater Impact

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Abstract

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → *Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms*; **User studies**.

Keywords

Participatory design, framework, broad impact, facilitating research

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1 Introduction

Participatory design (PD) emerged in the 1970s, primarily in Scandinavia, as a response to traditional top-down design approaches [9]. Since then, it has been utilized in industry and research with various stakeholders, including both adults and children [8, 16]. However, in order to continue to mature as a research approach, participatory design must move past its history of individual projects situated in a specific context [17] to address "big issues" which have broader societal impact [1, 11]. Emerging approaches such as distributed PD (DPD) offer promising avenues for this shift, enabling larger teams with more diverse perspectives to tackle problems both synchronously and asynchronously [2]. Improving the comparability of PD research plans and output data would also enable PD work to make larger, stronger, more substantial claims, and consequently have greater impact [1, 11]. This workshop will address the following key question: **How can we frame and facilitate (D)PD activities to achieve these greater impacts?**

The framing of PD activities, both within PD sessions and in research reporting, is vitally important to steering and understanding the outcomes of PD. While it is not essential for all PD projects on a given topic to adopt the same framing to enable comparison [18], consistent framing can enhance coherence and comparability across different teams, countries, or iterations of a (D)PD project. A consistent lens for analysis can also be of use in comparing and combining discrete projects [7]. The use of tools such as shared social imaginaries in framing PD problems has the potential to help participants stay "on topic", work towards "big picture" goals, and incorporate global perspectives that might otherwise be difficult to grasp [7].

Effective facilitation is central to PD, ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute their ideas. As PD evolves to address larger and more complex societal challenges – the so-called "big issues" – the importance of management and facilitation skills becomes even more vital. This need is amplified in contexts such as DPD or multi-site/multi-team collaborations [18], which increase the overhead of managing multiple teams as well as diverse output streams.

Moreover, addressing big issues such as climate change or mental health often involves emotionally charged and sensitive discussions. PD facilitators and researchers must have the necessary skills to support participants who choose to share difficult personal experiences or fears, as these insights can be essential to the design

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process. At the same time, care must be taken to protect other participants—and facilitators themselves—from the potential effects of secondary trauma. In these contexts, thoughtful management, facilitation, and framing of PD activities are crucial to creating a safe and productive environment.

1.1 Workshop Questions

To guide the discussion, the workshop will focus on two key themes: (1) how to frame (D)PD activities, and (2) how to support both participants and facilitators during the design process. These are unified by the question: How do we balance the desire for PD to have greater impact and tackle "big issues", while safeguarding the mental health of participants and facilitators?

Framing and Consistency in (D)PD Projects

- How do we frame (D)PD activities to achieve greater impacts?
- How important is the consistency of the framing to generate comparable PD data and outcomes?
- What tools could be used to scaffold diverse, yet overlapping, or comparable framings across multiple (D)PD projects?

Facilitation and Participant Support

- What are the key considerations for effectively facilitating (D)PD projects and activities?
- How do we support participants to feel comfortable sharing experiences and fears that inform the design space?
- How do we support both participants and facilitators when (D)PD topics become "heavy", i.e., emotionally difficult or very challenging?

1.2 Workshop Attendees

This will be a hybrid workshop. We welcome both physical and virtual attendees.

We invite position papers of no more than 2 pages plus references from attendees (using the CEUR Workshop Proceedings template), relevant to our workshop questions, or related questions, including:

- Considerations of framing for (D)PD projects or activities;
- Considerations for facilitating (D)PD projects or activities at any scale;
- Approaches for supporting participants in "heavy" moments, during and beyond (D)PD sessions;
- (D)PD projects which aimed to address "big issues" at any scale;
- (D)PD approaches intended to address societal issues and/or work at large scale;
- Ethical and practical considerations of involving participants in large scale and/or "heavy" topic (D)PD projects.

We also welcome workshop observers who do not submit position papers, but who can contribute to and learn from the workshop activities.

2 Workshop Structure

We propose a half-day workshop. We plan to spend ample time collaborating to identify best practices in framing, facilitation, and management of (D)PD to support greater overall impact of PD research. The proposed schedule for the workshop is:

15 mins Welcome and Introductions
Initial introductions and sharing of the participants' motivations for attending.

30 mins Lightning Talks
Short presentations by workshop participants to share relevant projects, perspectives, or provocations.

15 mins Q&A and Open Discussion
Follow-up questions and collective reflection on the lightning talks.

45 mins Group Work: Framing in (D)PD
Small group discussions exploring how we frame and structure (D)PD activities.

15 mins Group Reports: Framing
Sharing key insights and lessons learned with the larger group.

30 mins Networking Break
Informal time to connect and discuss shared interests.

45 mins Group Work: Facilitation of (D)PD
Small group discussions of facilitation, particularly when topics become (emotionally) challenging.

15 mins Group Reports: Facilitation
Sharing group reflections and recommendations with all participants.

30 mins Wrap up and conclusion
Summary by organisers. Whole group discussion of outcomes.

The specific times would need to be decided on the basis of overall workshop timelines.

3 Organisers' Backgrounds

The Pushing the Boundaries of Participatory Design research collaboration began in 2018, and has grown ever since. As the name says, we seek to push the boundaries of participatory design: to be more inclusive, to be more ethical, to survive a pandemic, and to address problems of a larger scale than any one researcher could address alone. We have previously run workshops at OzCHI [11], INTERACT [12], IDC [4, 6, 15], a Special Interest Group at CHI [3], a journal article in International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction (IJCCI) [5], and a special issue in IJCCI [13]. We have also published: advice on distributed PD [2], a research proposal for a world-wide PD project [4], a multi-site case study as a first attempt to synthesise diverse PD outputs into a more coherent whole [19], and a paper proposing the use of social imaginaries as a lens on participatory design [7].

Jessica Korte is a Senior Lecturer at Queensland University of Technology's School of Computer Science. She is passionate about PD's potential to empower individuals and communities. She developed a PD approach for designing with young Deaf children [10], and her current major focus is the participatory design of sign language technologies with the Australian Deaf community [14, 20].

Marie Boden is an Interaction Design researcher and educator at the University of Queensland. Marie collaborates closely with users in co-design and participatory design projects. Her main research interest is in social robotics and design of technology to support teaching and learning.

Sanjana Bhatnagar is an Associate Lecturer & Researcher at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. She has experience in Design Thinking, Human Computer Interaction, Graphic Design, and Interactive Technology.

Aurora Constantin is a Lecturer at the School of Informatics, University of Edinburgh, UK. Her research focuses on designing technology for individuals with special needs (e.g., children with autism), promoting accessibility, and using participatory approaches with diverse stakeholders. She is also interested in integrating Artificial Intelligence into educational tools to support students in developing both academic and personal skills.

Jerry Alan Fails is Department Chair and Professor of Computer Science at Boise State University in Idaho, USA. He has designed technologies with and for children using participatory design methods for more than twenty years. He currently is focusing on supporting children: as they search for materials online, to better understand and more safely navigate online spaces (security and privacy), and as they interact with others in extended reality.

Judith Good is Professor of Human Computer Interaction and Director of the Digital Interactions Lab at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. Her research focusses on the co-design of new technologies for both children and adults, with and without disabilities. She is also interested in developing new participatory methodologies to allow typically marginalised populations to play a central role in both the design and evaluation of new technologies.

Gavin Sim is a Reader in Human Computer Interaction. He has worked at UCLan since 2002. His research interests are in the area of HCI and educational technology, in particular usability / user experience evaluation methods. He is an active researcher within the ChiCI group, where his focus has been on evaluating user experience and usability within games and educational technology. He has written method papers for IDC, and has worked with the BBC.

Janet Read is a pioneer in the research area of Child Computer Interaction. She currently directs the UCLan Research Centre for Digital Life and leads the Child Computer Interaction Research group.

Eva Eriksson is an Associate professor in Interaction design at Aarhus University in Denmark. Eva specializes in developing technologies through participatory design in the field of human-computer interaction with a focus on public learning institutions.

4 Post Workshop Plans

Submitted position papers will be published on the workshop website.

If a sufficient number of position papers are received, workshop attendees will be invited to expand their position papers for inclusion in a workshop proceedings in https://ceur-ws.org/, using the CEUR Overleaf template.

Additionally, the workshop authors are planning a large scale project focused on tackling a "big issue" (i.e., climate change with children) and all attendees are invited to participate. They are expected to conduct ethically-approved PD using the generic protocol and report back with design data and/or adaptation data.

5 Use of Generative AI

Generative AI has not been used in the creation of this workshop proposal.

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