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Design, Innovation and Respect in the Global South

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Abstract. The aim of this panel is to facilitate a discussion on the practice of interaction design in the Global South in the context of current global discourses on development, as particularly evidenced in the United Nations' post-2015 development agenda. The panel will generate a thought-provoking debate based on different experiences and cultural and political reflections on designing and innovating in the Global South.

Keywords: interaction design, innovation, development, global south.

1 Panel Topics and Objective

The aim of this panel is to explore the current global discourse on development and situate these in terms of the real challenges faced by interaction designers 'on the ground'. Through their different perspectives and experiences panelists, will articulate the different ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of the concept and practice of interaction design in the Global South. This means questioning (1) 'what' we mean by design; (2) the relationships 'between' designers, what is designed and the intended users of those designs; and (3) 'how' we design.

At different levels the panelists will question the development discourse with a particular focus on the United Nations new universal agenda for post-2015 development goals set in 2013 by a high-level panel of presidents and foreign ministers: To what extent should the field of interaction design and international development (IDID) be underpinned by this agenda? Are development discourses such as the post 2015 agenda limiting innovation and sustainability in the Global South? How can designers in the Global South untangle the cultural and political scripts embedded in imported ID practices and tools? How can the Global South create their own design practices outside of these development discourses?

The panel will provoke different answers and a useful debate around these issues.

2 Panelists

2.1 Chris Csikszentmihályi: Innovating in the Global South

“As a humanist technologist, most of my work has been developed in the US for American users and situations. I have recently taken up the challenge of developing new technologies in the context of Uganda; we hope that what we are creating there might also be useful in much of the rest of the world. But Uganda is awash with the rubric of “development,” a fraught set of actors, agendas, and assumptions, and indeed one of the largest and most ubiquitous industries in this and many other countries. So even though my current project, RootIO seeks to create a platform for intra-community dialog in rural areas, when most professionals of any sort working in Uganda are exposed to it, they immediately state that it would be a great platform for development messaging and behavior change. These different goals, while not wholly exclusive, are very different. In this panel I hope to describe why I am less interested in development messaging than in intra-community media, and how we are designing for the latter but constantly forced into the mold of the former. I’ll bring in some of the post-colonial theory that informs our work, and how we feel that there is a difference between how users are defined in the Global South versus the North.”

Chris Csikszentmihályi is the current ERA chair at Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute. He has been a professor at colleges, universities, and institutes, including Distinguished Visiting Professor of Art and Design Research at Parsons the New School for Design. He cofounded and directed the MIT Center for Future Civic Media (C4), which was dedicated to developing technologies that strengthen communities. He also founded the MIT Media Lab's Computing Culture group, which worked to create unique media technologies for cultural and political applications. Trained as an artist, he has worked in the intersection of new technologies, media, and the arts for 16 years, lecturing, showing new media work, and presenting installations on five continents and one subcontinent. He was a 2005 Rockefeller New Media Fellow, and a 2007-2008 fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and has taught at the UC San Diego, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Turku University.

2.2 Torkil Clemmensen: Reframing HCI Concepts and Tools

“If we are to support a sustainable development, we need to integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions in our development and use of IT. I want to focus on the importance of reframing HCI from local perspectives by integrating cultural perspectives on HCI research and practice. In particular we need a) new concepts of usability and UX which are grounded in the practices of local people and local companies, b) a more diverse toolbox of HCI methods that better covers the diversity of human life, and c) to develop the UX profession itself (certification, specialization, community building). Paradoxically, to reframe HCI from local perspectives not only requires more empirical studies, but also reconsidering what theories that we use.”

Torkil Clemmensen, PhD, Professor mso at Department of IT Management, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. His interest is in Human-Computer Interaction,

in particular psychology as a science of design. The focus of his research is on cultural psychological perspectives on usability and user experience. As Danish representative in IFIP (International Federation of Information Processing) TC 13 (Technical committee on Human-Computer Interaction), and chair (2008-2014) of Working Group 13.6 on Human Work Interaction Design (HWID), he co-organizes a series of international working conferences on work analysis and usability/user experiences in organisational, human, social and cultural contexts..

2.3 Christian Sturm: Respect-Based Design

“It is not the economy - “It’s the respect, stupid!” Contrary to the common perspective that economic development is driving the well-being of people around the world, it is the missing respect that is responsible for the lack of it: lack of respect from employers toward employees, lack of respect from employees toward their employers, lack of respect from politicians toward citizens and vice versa, lack of respect from researchers toward study participants, from developers and designers toward users...the list is almost infinite. I argue that teaching and practicing respect together with raising the level of self-awareness and awareness of others is the closest we can get contributing to the “Post-2015 Development Agenda”. Let’s think of respect-based design approaches we could develop to get started.

Christian is professor at the Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences in Germany. He holds a bachelor in computer science from Furtwangen University and a PhD in cognitive psychology (major), cultural anthropology (minor) and telematics (minor) from the University of Freiburg. His research interests include cross-cultural aspects of HCI, UX and entrepreneurship, based on his experience living for many years in Mexico, Spain and Egypt.

2.4 Jose Abdelnour-Nocera: IDID under a new Development Agenda

“In May 2013 a United Nations High-level panel released a new universal agenda for post-2015 development goals. This agenda sets new goals for poverty eradication and sustainable development. As a sociotechnical designer, I will discuss the relevance, validity and viability of these goals in terms of concrete design experiences with Namibian farmers, South African townships and Venezuelan rural doctors. ”

José is Associate Professor in Sociotechnical Design and Head of the Sociotechnical Centre for Innovation and User Experience at the University of West London. He is the current Chair for IFIP TC 13.8 working group in Interaction Design for International Development as well as Chair for the British Computer Society Sociotechnical Specialist Group. His interests lie in the sociotechnical and cultural aspects of systems design, development and use. In pursuing these interests, he has been involved as researcher and consultant in several projects in the UK and overseas in the domains of mHealth, e-learning, social development, e-commerce, e-governance and enterprise resource planning systems. Dr. Abdelnour-Nocera gained an MSc in Social Psychology from Simon Bolivar University, Venezuela and a PhD in Computing from The Open University, UK.