
Learning from Marginalized Users: Reciprocity in HCI4D

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Abstract

Users in the developing world continue to appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs) in pioneering ways resulting in innovations such as M-Pesa, the popular mobile money transfer system developed in Kenya. M-Pesa's success demonstrates the emergence of user-centered innovative applications in resource-constrained settings. The goals of our workshop are twofold: 1) to uncover more of these examples and 2) to discuss how they can influence design in developed countries.

Keywords

HCI4D, ICT4D, Computing at the Margins (CoM), postcolonial computing, design and innovation.

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

General Terms

Design

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Introduction

CSCW/HCI researchers are increasingly interested in applying user-centered design principles to designing and evaluating ICTs for users in developing regions. This emerging area has various labels including "Human Computer Interaction for Development" (HCI4D), "Information and Communication Technologies for

Development" (ICT4D), and "Computing at the Margins" (CoM) [1-3]. Most of these efforts are undertaken by technology developers in Western regions of the world who build and deploy innovative applications, primarily for mobile phones, in developing or emerging economies. Notable examples of this research include Parikh's development of a mobile-phone application for microfinance institutions in rural India [4] and Patel and colleagues' evaluation of an interactive voice application that helps Indian farmers find relevant agriculture information [5].

These efforts *rightly* focus on the design and evaluation of new systems that could help emerging populations economically and socially. Yet, this approach may overestimate the role technology can play in addressing age-old problems such as poverty and illiteracy. Such projects also shift researchers' attention away from the various ways technology innovation is already happening in developing countries and from understanding how marginalized users appropriate technologies to solve local problems. Thus, the primary goal of our workshop is to uncover these ingenious ICT practices among users not typically considered during the ICT research, design, and manufacturing processes. In doing so, we will also uncover lessons for the design of products for the mainstream or typical target

population. We call this exchange of ideas from marginalized to mainstream users "reciprocity in HCI4D."

The CSCW community's focus on collaboration and empirically understanding ICT use in diverse contexts makes this conference an excellent site for exploring reciprocity in HCI4D. Though our focus on marginalized communities overlaps with HCI4D research we see opportunities to learn from other user groups, including (but not limited to) urban homeless, rural Americans, and migrant communities. The primary goal of our workshop is to highlight innovative ICT practices among overlooked users and look for opportunities to incorporate relevant practices into ICT design and development.

Workshop Themes

The activities in this workshop will focus on the following themes:

- 1. Highlight examples of innovative ICT practices outside of the "mainstream" user-base.**
- 2. Questioning the dualistic schemes such as "developed" and "developing" regions.**
- 3. Exploring alternatives to designing for differences.**
- 4. Ideas for incorporating the lessons learned in HCI4D into mainstream CSCW/HCI Research and Design**

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