

## Cultures of Participation

Cultures are defined in part by their media and their tools for thinking, working, learning, and collaborating. In the past, the design of most media emphasized a clear distinction between producers and consumers. The rise in social computing has facilitated a shift from consumer cultures (specialized in producing finished artifacts to be consumed passively) to cultures of participation (in which all people are provided with the means to participate and to contribute actively in personally meaningful problems). These developments represent unique and fundamental opportunities, challenges, and transformative changes for innovative research and practice in human-centered computing as we move away from a world in which a small number of people define rules, create artifacts, make decisions for many consumers towards a world in which everyone has interests and possibilities to actively participate. The presentation will discuss theoretical foundations and system developments for understanding, fostering, and supporting cultures of participation grounded in the basic assumption that innovative technological developments are necessary for cultures of participation, but they are not sufficient. Socio-technical environments are needed because cultures of participation are not dictated by technology: they are the result of changes in human behavior and social organization in which active contributors engage in innovative design, adoption, and adaptation of technologies to their needs and in collaborative knowledge construction.

*Background Article: Fischer, G. (2011) "Understanding, Fostering, and Supporting Cultures of Participation," ACM Interactions XVIII.3 (May + June 2011), pp. 42-53.*