

Universal design and standardisation – can user participation be standardized?

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Foto: Nicolas Tourenc

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- Norwegian member of CEN and ISO
- Approx. 75 employees
- 3 sectorial boards: Petrol, ICT, Building structures, construction and facilities
- 3 professional boards: Consumer issues, Energy labelling, Health

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On Universal Design and standardization

Universal design

- In Norwegian policy, the term of universal design is used increasingly, both in legislation, white books, reports and other policy documents
- Also in standardisation, this is a term more and more frequently used and included in standards in different areas
- Universal design is a tool for creating a barrier-free society for all, and to combat discrimination in the shape of barriers against accessibility
- Universal design is to everyone's benefit

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On standardization

What do standards do?

- Standards are, because of their exact description of characteristics of a product, an important tool for planners and designers
- Standards can specify accessibility clauses – when referring to universal design requirements it is important to include such clauses when developing standards that will be used by planners in their product specifications
- The lack of such requirements will lead to unsatisfactory and inaccessible solutions which may have to be compensated for in costly special solutions or reconstruction processes

The notion of user participation

The idea of involving users

- User participation means that those who are affected by a decision, or are beneficiaries of services, have influence on decision-making processes and the design of services (FFO)
- Not a new idea, but not always understood by those responsible for projects
- Users not always given the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way
- User participation is a means for empowering
- Opportunity to learn new skills

Usefulness of user participation

- Studies show the positive effect of user participation and that the early and continuous involvement of users is important during the whole process of development
- Possible better to read needs and views of market
- Improve insight into the experience of users and impact of approaches and techniques
- FORTUNE project 1997: Developed a concept for user participation in R&D. Key concept: Equal partnership

Methodology –
developing a standard
for user participation

Development of NS 11040

- A new approach to develop a formal standard with a set of process requirements
- Standardisation committee decided to develop a process based standard based on a human-centered development process
- A model was developed involving:
 - Planning and organizing a human-centered development process
 - Understanding and specifying the context of use
 - Specifying the user requirements
 - Producing design solutions to meet the requirements
 - Evaluating the design solutions against the requirements

Involvement

- The early steps in such a process can be repeated as many times as is deemed necessary until the solution meets user requirements and is of satisfactory quality
- Participating users shall be involved in the process – in several activities in each iteration, at least 2 activities
- NS 11040 recommends at least 2-3 iterations when developing new products – but this may vary according to the product

Levels of user participation

- User participation takes place on two levels:
 - Individual level – individuals participate in the development process and represent only themselves
 - System level – representatives of interest organisations or groups of users participate in various ways in the development process in order to represent the interests of these users

Users can also participate in different capacities:

- Informative level – user provides information
- Consultative level – user gives advice
- Co-decision maker – user is part of the decision-making process (recommended)

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Conclusion

To conclude

- User participation is an important part of work for equal participation
- To concretize the requirements, a standard is an important instrument to ensure that user participation is an integrated part of all phases of a development process for products and services
- The best method to develop this is through a consensus-based process where all interested parties had an opportunity to make inputs to the final result

Thank you for your attention!

- More information:
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