Interaction for inclusion: Who should be included?

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Inclusion is the main challenge for Human-Computer Interaction nowadays. Working for universal usability and providing access to Information and Communication Technology, for the widest possible range of people, is the target of numerous projects and consortia all over the world. They involve industry, academia, governmental and non-governmental agencies alike. They focus mainly on TIC *users*, but there is at least one other focus that one talks about, knows of, and takes concrete initiatives for much less often than one should – the *inclusion of other disciplines* in universal access and usability projects.

This talk draws on data collected among Computer Science Graduate Programs in Brazil and shows that, in view of the official current goals of government initiatives regarding ICT and Digital Inclusion, one should take urgent steps towards more *inclusive* curricula and more concrete collaboration among computer scientists and researchers from the Social and Human Sciences. To illustrate the challenges and needs for *multidisciplinary inclusion*, I will present the profile of the *Brazilian Interactive TV Consortium*, in which SERG is involved. The overall goal of the project is to propose the technical standards for iTV in Brazil, including usability requirements, given that the government aims to provide public Internet access and basic IT services through iTV. Affordable set-top boxes connected to TV sets owned by 90% of Brazilian households should thus be the gateway for *digital inclusion* in the country.

However, in spite of clear-cut social and individual implications of iTV for the Brazilian population and society, the participation of researchers from outside the field of Computer Science and technical ITC is only marginal. The reasons for this can be found in both education and research practices in Brazil. A strong disciplinary emphasis throughout professional education is likely to be the main reason for the lack of understanding and experience that discourage the participation in the ICT industry of professionals trained in the Social and Human Sciences. The sole exception may be graphic designers, usually in charge of the look and feel of product interfaces, and linguists, usually in charge of product localization and translation. This is but a timid perspective on what multidisciplinary contribution should actually be in a country like Brazil. Even on the research side of the issue, most Brazilian ICT projects are proposed and carried out with virtually no contribution from outside the areas of Computer Science and Telecommunications.

Because HCI is not only the door to the technology from a *use* perspective, but also the most inherently multidisciplinary facet of Computer Science, part of the problem may be due to the lack of *bridging theories* in HCI itself – theories that can be understood and used by researchers in Social and Human Sciences that are willing to work with ICT. There are only few theories that meet two crucial criteria for multidisciplinary discussions – breadth of coverage and explicit statements about their ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments. By taking Semiotic Engineering as an example, I will conclude the talk by identifying opportunities and proposing a few steps in HCI education and research in Latin America.