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# A Design Perspective on Participation Research

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## Abstract

The term *participation* has been used in a wide range of contexts and scientific traditions inside and outside of the disability field. This has led to a rather large number of examples regarding how to work in practice with participation, how to study it, and what factors that are important for peoples' opportunities to take part in different activities.

The word participation is often used without a clear definition. Researchers have been trying to come up with and establish a definition that can be used throughout the whole of the disability field, but there still isn't a single definition that is used across disciplines and traditions. Instead of trying to pinpoint a single definition of the term, the purpose of this presentation is to give an overview of how participation is conceptualized and used in different fields. The presentation is based on an ongoing survey commissioned by the Swedish Agency for Participation. The survey takes its outset in the themes that are brought forward in the Agency's directives from the Swedish Government: Participation, Accessibility, Universal Design, Welfare technology (Välståndsteknologi), Environment, Living Conditions, and Rights for people with disabilities. These all focus on different conditions and prerequisites for participation.

The presentation is based on preliminary results from the survey. To narrow the scope somewhat, the presentation will be presented from a design science perspective, with an emphasis on design factors and design thinking. This entails describing the conditions for participation as interwoven in the interplay between humans and artefacts. By viewing the survey's results from a design perspective, supporting human and artefactual factors will be related to each other while maintaining peoples' needs, wishes and dreams as the main driver behind the activities at hand.

**Keywords:** Participation, people with disabilities, accessibility, universal design, welfare technology

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