October 15th 2022

How Participative Democracy and Grass-Root Mobilisation influenced

User Participation in Information System Security Risk Management

By Patricia Lapierre

Spears and Barki wrote, in 2010, an article about performing information systems security risk assessment, involving user participation. The literature on user participation highlights the benefits of using human resource as strength during evaluations. According to this field study, three theories explain the high level of success when participants are involved. The first one, the buy-in theory, can be explained as the perceived importance of the system by the users once they have been included and invested in the process. The system quality theory is the second theory which argues that with the users' participation, the implicated parties become more aware of the business needs. Lastly, the emergent interaction theory allows users and information systems professionals to develop a common synergy that ensure successful outcomes.

The concept of 'user participation' is not new. In 1991, Vasoo cites in his article ,

Grass-root Mobilisation and Citizen Participation: issues and Challenges, Spiro

and Liron (1981):

> "It is expected to improve the quality of planning, to make programmes responsive to the desires and preferences of local residents, to reduce alienation, enhance the power of the low classes, improve communication between government and the people, encourage moderation and responsibility among the residents".

This extract comes from the political sphere, however the similarities with the user

participation theory are quite canning. It can be argued that grass-root mobilization

movement and citizen participation concepts have infiltrated the business sphere

decades later, especially considering the positive outcomes resulting from users'

engagement. Additionally, still in the political literature, a previous concept had

emerged in the 1960s, which was the participatory democracy. According to this

theory, lower classes must "become conscious of their interests, they must actually

become involved in the political process" (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992: 11). This

theory also highlights that the participants become conscient of their interests

through communication and engage dialogues, which in turn provides a higher

sense of legitimacy for engaging in decision making.

Although, it can be far-fetched to believe that user participation theory directly

derives from grass-root mobilisation and citizens participation theory or

participative democracy theory, it is undeniable that the underlying ideas are quite

similar, as the following table correlates the similarities.

	Participatory Democracy Theory	Grass-Root Mobilisation and Citizens Participation Theory	User Participation theory
Who	Lower class	Citizens, residents	User
What & How	• Become involved, invested, and interested • Aware *of their interests* • Engage in dialogue with different groups to develop collaborative views to move forward • Engage in decision-making	• Become involved, invested, and interested • Aware *of their interests* • Engage in dialogue with different groups to develop collaborative views to move forward • Engage in decision-making • Propose	• Become involved, invested, and interested • Aware *of the business interests* • Engage in dialogue with different groups to develop collaborative views to move forward • Engage in decision-making

References

Bachrach, P., & Botwinick, A. (1992). *Power and empowerment: A radical theory of participatory democracy.* Temple University Press. [Online]

Spears, J. L., & Barki, H. (2010). User participation in information systems security risk management. *MIS quarterly*, 503-522. [Online]

Vasoo, S. (1991). Grass-root mobilisation and citizen participation: issues and challenges. *Community Development Journal, 26*(1), 1-7. [Online]