

This book explores a practice-based approach to the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological foundations of human-centered computing.

It critically examines the notion of “practice” and argues for an understanding of the concept that emanates from engagement with design problems rather than simply from the philosophy of the social sciences.

The contributors, in their various ways, all subscribe to a systematic account of how practice-oriented studies can inform the design of IT artifacts. Developing a “grounded design” framework, the book pursues a long-term view of the design process, arguing for user engagement from the very earliest stages of design, including methods for understanding user practices to inform initial designs up to and including processes of appropriation as IT artifacts are embedded in contexts of use. Grounded Design also deals with the vexed problem of appropriate generalization in design studies and the kinds of cross-comparison that can usefully be done.

The book contains a number of case studies that exemplify these themes, some of which are rooted in the use of technology in organizational contexts, while others deal with design in contexts such as care of the elderly, firefighting, and multicultural education.