Focusing on inclusive sociotechnical work systems in dynamically changing workplace configurations – an interdisciplinary perspective

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Design of work systems and especially enterprise software is still mainly influenced by the assumption of a bell curve normal distribution (Adorno, 2006). Thus, digital solutions and innovation are tailored to the "average user" and existing workplaces come with the requirement to fit into this normative standard (Moser, 2000). This approach neglects people with disabilities or complex needs that would not only be supported by the accessibility of work systems but are dependent on it. Participation in labor is particularly important for improving life chances and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) explicitly stresses this in art. 27 as a central component of inclusive societies. The inclusive design of work places and the relating technologies should thus be interwoven with established and recognized processes of human-centered technology design to actually center technology around *all* humans.

Simultaneously, established work systems themselves are subject of dynamic changes due to technological, demographic or societal changes. One example is the spread and acceptance of hybrid workplace configurations since the Covid-19 pandemic (Bockstahler et al.,2020) and the resulting permanent change of physical presence in everyday office life (Oehring et al.,2023). Effective collaboration in these permanently changing constellations of physical co-presence and digital representation requires tools that are not only accessible in a technical sense but rather accessible for all actors within these collaboration processes. Already in established work systems, people with disabilities are often confronted with time-intensive workarounds and a dependence on supportive colleagues (Kiossis et al., 2020). Therefore, when facing changes in work systems in general, a focus on the inclusiveness of whole sociotechnical work systems is necessary.

We suggest to discuss ways how HCI can more effectively integrate insights from 1) other disciplines such as disability studies or rehabilitation sciences to build on prior knowledge when developing for more people than just the average user, and from 2) the praxis side such as industry or social economy (Burzlaff & Mörike, 2023) to adapt approaches to existing informal work processes and contexts. On the example from Germany we argue that legal processes, such as the implementation of the European Accessibility Act (EAA) in Germany the Barrierefreiheitsstärkungsgesetz (from July, 2025) delineate major opportunities for a broader implementation of inclusive technology design approaches: all software manufacturers, including those developing work systems, are confronted with the obligation to consider accessibility in their products. As legislation is seen as the most influential enabler of accessibility (Wegge & Zimmermann, 2007), we see this law change as a chance to accelerate the development of inclusive sociotechnical work systems.

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