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Session Title: Linking user populations to novel networks in Future Internet research programmes

Session organiser(s): Rémi Francard (FDF)

Purpose & Audience

This session addressed a multi-originating audience from individuals, SMEs, to EC projects members who could bring ground breaking ideas and advanced Internet technologies. The major emphasis was on understanding and promoting benefits of user-centricity and user-centered innovation in industries. For example, since games are emerging as innovation platforms it is important to gain a better understanding of how such platforms can be leveraged to help in rapid transition of products and/or services from opportunity assessment to industrialization.

Key message(s):

- People need to learn and innovate – they want to invent and become social innovators.
- Technology has not the innovation monopoly; we need an open innovation ecosystem-where people like to do innovative things!
- We need to open up and have users becoming partners and entrepreneurs

Many 'Future Internet' projects face the challenge of scaling-up the innovative internet services that they developed with in their projects. However there is nothing new about collaborating with people, the knowledge is out there. So is this about the attitude of the experimenters? Do they miss the opportunity to connect with users? Is this technical approach which can be shortsighted, not capable to grasp all the end users needs? There is not a single answer but multiple challenges and approaches for successfully scaling-up innovative internet services.

Summary

Future Internet research projects must now increasingly address the challenge of bringing together advanced infrastructures, innovative applications and populations of users to validate results in realistic target environments. At the same time, they must provide environments where SMEs can introduce and test technology within a broader technological framework.

This is not just a living lab approach (although some lessons can be learnt) but a complex endeavour requiring deeper technology integration, business models with broader range of stakeholders and user

populations with socio-economic diversity representing communities across Europe and beyond. There are new dynamics in our societies which are driven by the technology. These new rules are shifting the roles of consumers to “prosumers”. The end users expect to participate to the content and the design of the product they consume. These are new constraints that need to be considered for the research projects to become successful.

The Challenge is to bring users to collaborate at earlier stage and to engage users to a more active role. Therefore how projects should answer to these expectations; by creating meaningful synergies between users and technology?

We need to know about people characteristics, so that we can bring them something they can find interesting. A new attitude is required so to treat people with respect as they are experts in their lives and learn.

We usually start with the wrong approach by defining the user into a set of functional needs. What the technologist defines as a user with a list of needs is a wrong approach. This approach overlooks the real complexity of the user profile and ends up with a proposal for users that is disconnected with the reality. We forget human tribes out of the radar of the official personae; the “modern geek”. There is a loss of understanding of who we are designing for and that there is a world outside this world of technology and gadget which is different.

The approach must evolve; the technology does not have the monopoly of innovation. In fact People are demanding to be part of innovative activities. We need an open innovation ecosystem welcoming them in the early phases of projects. The ecosystem should encourage the entrepreneurial dynamic and propose a frame to onboard the participant as effective partner.

The challenge becomes to manage the users as active participants of the project. The project organization should guarantee and support openness while keeping the leadership.

There have been user centric studies and methods that included user’s participation at the early stages. It didn’t bring more value in the project than understanding pattern of behaviour and defining technical objectives such as the QoS. Trying to have more in depth analysis of their behaviour, using for instance the cultural probing, can be also a way. We must not forget to maintain the trust with the end user by having shared with him clear rules of user privacy. There are also narratives which are developed by people that must be considered also. These stories are rich in information but they are still difficult to help the design of innovative products.

In this exchange, between the project and the end users, both need to learn and innovate together. When the end user invents, they are social innovators. This motivation must be considered and agreed as part of the project. Considering the end users as partners in the project is certainly a good “ingredient” for good results in the project.

Conclusion

The solutions exist but technologists require a change in the attitude towards the end user. The focus is not about setting the “QoS” even though the technical constraints must be taken into account. The challenge is to be ready to manage an ecosystem of open innovation that can welcome the users with entrepreneurial spirit as an effective partner. The internet is evolving and soon will not be technology driven anymore but socially driven. This challenge is then to become imaginative to share and envision with the user the social benefits that can be expected.

Recommendations

- Have a project innovation system defined but focus on people’s innovation!
- Get them in a collaborative network at different in the earlier phase of the project:
- The end user can become partner in the project bringing in new ideas that can be turned into applications that add value.

Explore Project architecture with an open development model that keeps:

- High Flexible software architecture capable to adapt
- Legislation and ethical concern that need to keep the pace
- Systematic participation of users
- Cross-disciplinary model
- Various IPR MODELS
- Clear incentives to end users (combine extrinsic and intrinsic)
- QoE should be set first more than QoS
- The project must be Open to different cultures and different communities
- It must guarantee the Transparencies of data users

Propose a “User Advisory Board” that ensure the engagement of local authorities and communities for the experimentation.

Practical issues

The project finance must consider extra costs of “multipliscinary” approaches in order to integrate different knowledge, culture and languages.

Increasing the participation of external actors at the early stage implies to be ready to accept a bit of chaos in the organization and accept a risk of failure of the project.

Integrating the user as a partner is important to successfully engage them but what is the limit of the number of partners that the project can accept?