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Socio-technical typologies of elderly and their vote for successful innovation

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1. Introduction and objective

Many AAL projects are geared to develop innovations that improve the lives of the elderly. Therefore, to be accepted, and thus successful, these must as well as possibly satisfy the needs or meet the predispositions of the elderly.

One of the basic challenges of this task is that “the elderly” are all but a homogeneous group of people. In order to be adaptive and yet avoid too much expensive individualization we therefore propose to segment the overall group of elderly into sub-groups with similar qualities regarding the innovation task to be performed. One approach to do so is the development of socio-technical typologies, similar to the milieus developed in market research. In this paper we will illustrate the development of such a typology, and its various applications in a complex AAL project.

2. Method

This paper is inspired in the holistic innovation approach proposed by Moritz (2009). This methodology consists of several well-linked steps that guide the whole innovation process and ensure its success, which basically is focused on meeting the users’ needs and shaping a better future scenario. One of the first steps is focused in the context system analysis. In this phase we analyze and interpret several relevant issues such as: innovation potential, barriers, boundary conditions, target group, in this project especially elderly people and their needs.

One main part of this context system analysis was the here presented typology. The methodological foundation of the development of the typology is within the expertise of Innovationsmanufaktur GmbH (further SportKreativWerkstatt GmbH), the approach is loosely oriented at the milieus produced by sinus (www.sinus-institut.de). To describe it briefly, after the final definition of the types and an explorative filling of the table thus created in an expert workshop, a set of questions were produced to verify the hypotheses regarding existing proposals for typologies, and identify new ones. These questions were delivered in a questionnaire to more than 200 elderly, and on the basis of the analysis the typology was amended and improved.

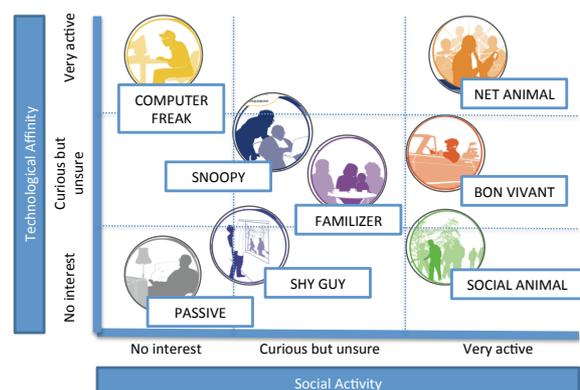


Figure 1. Elderly typology

3. Results

The result is a unique typology that helps to understand and categorize those features of elderly. We propose to structure our target group taking into account two variables: **social interaction** and **technical affinity**. The figure 1 shows the typology that we propose. In the vertical axis we can see the technical affinity, and in the horizontal axis we present the social activity. Eight groups of elderly people have been included in this typology:

4. Conclusions

The main conclusions of this paper are:

- Elderly people are a heterogeneous group in terms of social interaction and technological affinity.
- This typology allows us to better understand relevant end users features, as well as, to understand the end user needs and predispositions.
- The results of this paper will help the AAL community to produce better fitting, desired, and well-adapted products and services for elderly people.

5. References

Moritz, E.F., (2009); *Holistische Innovation - Konzept, Methodik und Beispiele*; Springer Verlag, Heidelberg