

## **Editorial: Future Directions**

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(Guest Editor)

From May 23rd till May 25th COST 298 "Participation in the Broadband Society" organised a conference in Moscow with the name *The Good, the Bad and the Unexpected*' ([www.cost298.org](http://www.cost298.org)). The main objective of the conference was to bring together researchers from all over the world to exchange knowledge on the creativity of users and their empowerment in a broadband information society. From the perspective of COST 298, the Broadband Society refers to a possible, but not inevitable, substantial transformation of our experience of telecommunications based on these technologies, allowing information and communication technologies to be used everywhere, all the time and by everybody.

Both the technological environment and wider society are evolving through a process of mutual interaction. Even if one accepts that the results of the development in society cannot be reliably predicted, it is also clear that vast investments are being made in the intentional development of technologies, including broadband technologies, with certain aims and strategies, and based on some set of assumptions about the future. In fact, all such futureoriented action is based on some kind of a vision about the future, whether it is explicitly articulated or not. These intentions and assumptions have a great influence upon the whole development agenda, the specific development processes, and the results of these endeavours.

At the moment, the community that is developing these technologies receives only a limited amount of input that they can use for creating or verifying these assumptions from the wider research community. This is partly because of the different 'cultures' of the two communities and partly because of particular institutional practices. For example, engineers are not used to studying people and their practices, and social scientists, on the other hand, are usually not used to speculating about the future or providing design ideas based on their work. In order to create better quality ideas about the future uses of new technology, these different disciplinary communities need to be brought together and their cooperation in the developing future directions of design must be specifically facilitated.

In this special edition of Observatorio(OBS\*) Journal we bring together a number of papers that deal with the issue of innovation and the ways users fit it into their everyday lives. They were presented in the conference strand "Future Directions".

The first part of the special issue deals with broadband scenarios and includes the following papers:

- Kresten Bjerg: Empowering Citizen Self-documentation - Re-inventing the Diary
- Yiannis Laouris, Marios Michaelides, Bartolomeo Sapio: A Systemic Evaluation of the Obstacles preventing the Wider Public Benefiting from and Participating in the Broadband Society
- Ovidiu Chirca, Constantin-Bala Zamfirescu: IT Tools For Technology Foresight
- Michael Klontzas: iVision and the BBC: Building Public Value

In the second part the accent is on designing social changes, with the following contributions:

- Johan Criel, Laurence Claeys: A Transdisciplinary Study Design on Context Aware Applications and Environments - A Critical View on User Participation within Calm Computing
- An Jacobs, Katrien Dreessen, Jo Pierson: 'Thick' Personas – Using Ethnographic Methods for Persona Development as a Tool for Conveying the Social Science View in Technological Design
- Jo Pierson, An Jacobs, Katrien Dreessen, Lieven De Marez: Exploring and Designing Wireless City Applications by way of Archetype User Research within a Living Lab
- Ville Tikkanen, Andrea Botero Cabrera: Using Video to Support the Co-Design of Information and Communication Technologies