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New Playdecks for Location Based Services

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Abstract

New PLAYdecks for Location Based Services reports on a project grounded research in the field of designing Human Centred Location Based Services. It examines the question whether and how the increasing number of services which are dealing with our personal location is changing the way we approach and interact with these places. The aim of this research is to provide a sequence of methods embraced by a theoretical framework which deals with the design of LBS. At the core stands the case study SnowSense, a Location Based Service for backcountry skiers developed together with the WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF and the Section Davos of the Swiss Alpine Club SAC. The preliminary studies and the work on this project contributed the necessary expertise and knowledge to deliver the methodological approach discussed in the second part of the present text.

The first part instead outlines both the historical and technological development of LBS. Further it sets out to define a new concept of interaction and play: *Handlungsspielraum*. This concept rose from the question why during our SnowSense test event the feedback of our skiers was much higher than expected and of a playful nature. By sending back a large number of photographs and messages it seemed that the LBS which was initially designed for sharing information about snow and weather conditions inspired them to turn their experience in some sort of 'social game', knowing that other people would see their pictures and messages. This playful interaction came as a surprise and showed that despite our human centred approach and a series of participatory methods, the actual use or 'interpretation' of our user's went even beyond what has been planned.

This experience led to the decision to further investigate the unexpected way our users interpreted the application and also find out more about the motivations for the behaviour in this specific case. Further the question was how to integrate the potential which lies in the 'unintended' interpretations of our products into the design process and which would be appropriate ways to 'invite' our users to make use of it. Result of this specific research is the first definition of the concept *Handlungsspielraum* which describes a conceptual space where the user's playful interactions unfold. It is outlined by six corner points – *Exploration, Performance, Momentary, Continuous, Constraints* and *Freedom* – at it's centre stands the place the user's play develops: the *playdeck*.

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