

Addressing eAccess+: HCITOCH Venice and XII WLO Conference Rimini, September 2012.

Veroniek Maat MSc.

Representative of ENAT in the Netherlands

In order to represent and promote the eAccess+ project across Europe, two conferences were attended in September 2012. The first, the HCITOCH (Human Computer Interaction, Tourism and Heritage) took place in the old San Leonardo Church in Venice. The second, the 12th World Leisure Organization Conference was held in Rimini with 4 days of presentations by leisure academics and professionals. The first two days were attended, which focussed on the topics 'people' and 'place'.

Goal of attending the conferences was to inform other participants of the conferences about eAccess+. At both conferences a presentation was given. First talking about ENAT, making the audience familiar with the issue of accessible tourism and secondly addressing the eAccess+ project. (www.eaccessplus.eu and <http://hub.eaccessplus.eu>)

The four eAccess+ subjects related to accessible tourism and heritage were addressed; (1)web accessibility, (2)Self Service Terminals (SST's), (3)personal information systems, (4)ICT tools for planning and managing accessible destinations. Examples were given to the audience to enable them to understand the subjects, explaining how to implement e-accessibility and advising them to visit and register on the eAccess+ hub to gather information and to join the network. During the conference days, out of the conference rooms, the project was further explained and discussed to encourage participants to consider and implement e-accessibility.

HCITOCH Conference

Especially at the HCITOCH conference academics were interested, as most of them were computer scientists or digital program researchers and developers. Their presentations mostly encompassed creating optimal user experience (UX) with service design / user center design (UCD).

Dr. David Benyonⁱ for example, talked about tours realized using digital content. Certain locations are loaded with digital content, this content can be triggered when the user passes the 'touchpoint'. The user is informed about the availability of this digital content by a move or sound from their mobile device.

Another example was given by Carl Smithⁱⁱ from London Technology Research Institute, developing augmented reality applications such as layers. A layer application can be installed on the mobile device and pointed at a certain venue or object, consequently information pops up about this venue or object. This information can be the name of the venue, history about the

venue but it could also include accessibility information about the venue. This example and the former example about digital content can both be used to address e-accessibility at tourism occasions. It is important for developers to also consider the accessibility of the programs.

Other ideas are:

- Using motion capture to enable people with hearing loss and communicating using sign language to narrate to a broader audience. Capturing their movements and translating this into spoken and written language can be displayed on a screen and/or directly translated into spoken text.
- Using motion capture to enable communicating through sign language to write, draw and explain capturing peoples' motions. This creates possibilities for interaction at tourism/leisure venues.
- Out of body experiences using virtual reality. This example was shown by Carl Smith with a Youtube video. This out of body experiences is realized using a helmet with sensors.

A focal point is that we can use e-access to design experiences instead of services. Service communication becomes experiences communication, as such a holiday service could become a holiday experience. This could improve the leisure or holiday experiences and memories of people with disabilities. We could also consider addressing the theories of physical and digital space.

Most of these tools relate to subject 3 and 4 of the eAccess+ project, personal information systems and managing and planning accessible destinations. Subject 2, SST's could also be applicable as motion capture could be used to control devices (ATM's, ticketing machines, tourist information points).

XII World Leisure Conference

At the WLO Conference the eAccess+ project was presented among a group of professionals and academics with interest for mobile applications and online communities such as Facebook and Couchsurfing¹. David Minton, developer of the mobile application called Splashpath explained how his app provides people with hands on information about accessibility to swimming pools in the UK. Accessibility referring to; distance to swimming pools, time tables and classes. At the same time it also offered a platform to connect with other swimmers, as the swimmers can indicate their favourite swimming pool, log in when they arrived at a swimming pool and keep track of the distances the swam. Additionally, Mintonⁱⁱⁱ integrated accessibility information for people with a mobile disability by linking the application to information provided by

¹ www.couchsurfing.com is an online exchange platform, enabling travelers to sleep at a locals' house for free. In return they exchange roles of traveler and host.

DisabledGo². DisabledGo in this matter manages accessibility information for pwd's of all kinds of venues in the UK.

The sessions about Facebook and Couchsurfing could not directly be related to eAccess+, however if the website of Couchsurfing was fully accessible in terms of web accessibility, it could be used by pwd's with common disabilities to exchange hospitality services.

A number of other sessions were attended, also offering a platform to discuss e-accessibility. Nimrot^{iv} discusses the accessibility of the WWW for older adults the number of seniors using the WWW has increased. However, the WWW does not offer differentiation regarding the different user groups and is therefore not always user friendly for older adults. A homogenous perception of the user group causes the inconsideration of certain user barriers, which could constrain them in using the WWW. Barriers include;

1. Distance and access to internet
2. Time to go on the internet
3. Motivation; internet is not always perceived as safe
4. Social relations (occupations) and psychological stability
5. Energy to go on the internet
6. Knowledge about using the internet
7. Money to access a computer and/or internet
8. Physical ability to use the internet

A number of these barriers can be addressed regarding the eAccess+ project, namely motivation, knowledge and physical ability. With regards to motivation and knowledge, more information can be provided to seniors about the use and safety on the internet. This could for example be realized by spreading brochures throughout elderly houses and elderly recreation centres, offer training sessions, social gatherings discussing internet etc. The 3rd barrier that could be addressed by the eAccess+ network is physical ability to use the internet. Physical barriers could include inability to use a keyboard, mouse, tablet or screen. These barriers have already been addressed by the eAccess+ board, but need continuing attention. Varying solutions have been developed to enabled everyone to use computer and mobile devices to go on the internet, however as the research points out, these solutions have not reached all users. It is focal to make the solutions accessible for the potential users by:

1. Improving communication about existence to end users, family and friends
2. Reasonable pricing
3. Make it available for end users, by developing a social program providing pwd's with a computer and internet in order to improve inclusion, encourage creativity and encourage a social network (online and/or offline).

² DisabledGo is a UK based organization that provides UK citizens with disabilities with information about access to venues, events and care across UK.

At last, the issue of accessible transportation and use of this transportation was discussed. Accessible transportation in London was the topic of discussion. According Minton, busses in London city centre offer improved accessibility, but are not often used by the initiated end users. This indicates the end users do not want to use the busses even though they are accessible, the accessibility has not improved according to the needs of the end users or the improved accessibility is not communication to the end users. This would be a separate study, but it is interesting to find out what has been done to communicate accessibility of busses in London to the end users.

Conclusion

To close with, in the future of smart cities, considering modern as well as historic cities, venues might or might not be accessible to all users. An important notion for organizations, entrepreneurs and governments in order to make a city accessible for all (locals, tourists) is to bring the places to the people, not the people to the places. Developments regarding e-accessibility play a crucial role in regards to this vision.

References

ⁱ Dr. David Benyon is professor Human Computer Systems since 1996 at Edinburgh Napier University Scotland

ⁱⁱ Carl Smith works at the Learning Technology Research Institute (LTRI), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at London Metropolitan University.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Minton, UK; 'Sports App help improve participation through better information'. Session at XII World Leisure Organization Conference, Rimini 2012.

^{iv} Galit Nimrot, Israel; 'Going online: the technological trend in seniors' leisure and the current state of research'. Session at XII World Leisure Organization Conference, Rimini 2012.