CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION
Aspects of young Danes' uses of mobile phones

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by

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The aim of this paper is to focus on learning perspectives of young Danes' innovative and creative uses of mobile phones. The process can be described as a number of reciprocally intertwined conditions:

Practice + experience + need + curiosity + imagination $\rightarrow$ innovative/creative use

which is intertwined with:

needs for the mobile phone + focus on/trial of usability and functionality + creativity $\rightarrow$ "dependency"/integration in everyday uses + attitudes + reflexivity

It is a common assumption, also within academia, that young media users are generally as well early adapters as innovative in their uses of especially digital media. A large scale study of 15-24 year old Danes' uses of the mobile phone[1], however, shows that even if young mobile users are curious, positive, open to new media technology, only few can be described as innovators or early adaptors, as theorized by E.M. Rogers[2]. Before the large majority of young Danish users adapt new technology and new services they need to see functionality, usability, quality, low prices and the likeliness that the technology or content is being integrated in their social and cultural practices.

Leaving market theory and trend studies and taking the user perspective, it is obvious, that a lot of innovative and creative exploration and adaptation does take place in everyday uses of the mobile technology. Leslie Haddon points towards the usual image of 'the innovative scientist' or 'creative artist' which sometimes leads to very high expectations to the level of innovation. He asks the central question of: "How novel does 'innovatory use' has to be?"[3] Our study points to the fact that a large part of innovative and creative uses can be identified at ground level, representing both exploration of technological solutions, new ways of using existing software and services, and it relates to exploration of designed potentials as well as to unanticipated uses.

The paper discusses how learning of innovative and creative uses take place in a dual process of individual exploration and distributed inspiration/motivation within social and cultural networks.

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[1] Empirically the paper builds on a study of 15 to 24year old Danes' uses of mobile phones, which comprehends 48 qualitative interviews plus a quantitative survey. The data was collected during fall 2004 and is analysed in relation to a cooperative project on content services by University of Copenhagen, National Danish Broadcasting Company, TDC/TeleDenmark, IT University, Danish Design School. The project started January 2005 and runs for two years. The study and the paper are also inspired by the works of among others Haddon, Ling, Segerstad and Kasesniema. Theoretically the paper builds primarily on innovation theory (Haddon, M. Tomlinson et al, Sejer Jakobsen), theories on media and mobility (Haddon, Urry, Harper, Green, Wakeford), and media theory (McLuhan, Meyrowitz, Levinson, Rheingold).

[2] Everett M. Rogers (1983): *Diffusion of innovations*. New York: The Free Press.

[3] Leslie Haddon (2003): "What is Innovatory Use? A Thinkpiece", in Haddon, L., Mante-Meijer, E., Sapio, B., Kommenon, K-H, Fortunati, L., and Kant, A. (eds) *The Good, the Bad and the Irrelevant: The User and the Future of Information and Communication Technologies*, Conference Proceedings, 1-3, September, Helsinki.