TA2 Newsletter
July 2009

Content

TA2 - bringing families and friends closer together

Making communications and engagement easier among groups of people separated in space and time. This is the main goal of the European research project TA2 (Together Anywhere, Together Anytime). Since our last Newsletter in September 2008 the project has made significant steps towards this goal.

More information is available on the TA2 website: http://www.ta2-project.eu
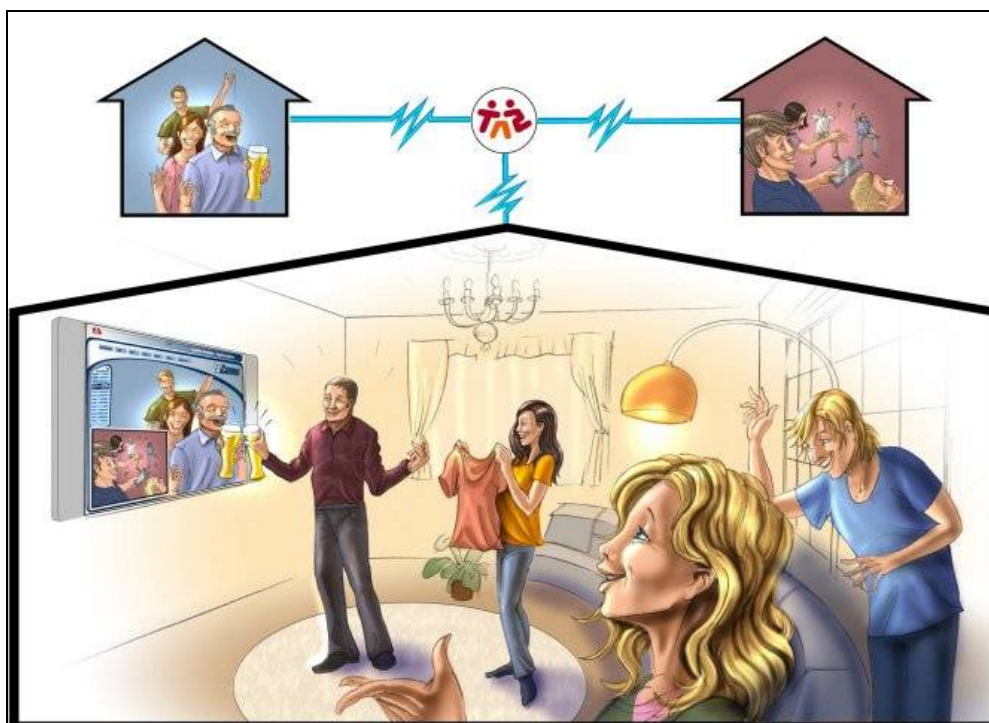
Families and friends interacting naturally with their relatives and friends abroad

The TA2 design methodology – twist like a rope

TA2 is mainly a technology project and seeks to test hypotheses about the impact certain technical capabilities can have on the overarching goal to enable improved relationships between friends and families by using ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), providing natural and enjoyable ways to communicate.

To do this effectively TA2 is integrating social scientists, interaction designers and technologists. As insights from these disciplines are wound together, we will be able to sensibly evaluate whether the emergent technologies that TA2 is developing and integrating, do positively affect the way we build and nurture relationships with friends and family.

TA2 is building a number of prototype applications that will enable the impact of the technologies to be assessed with real users.
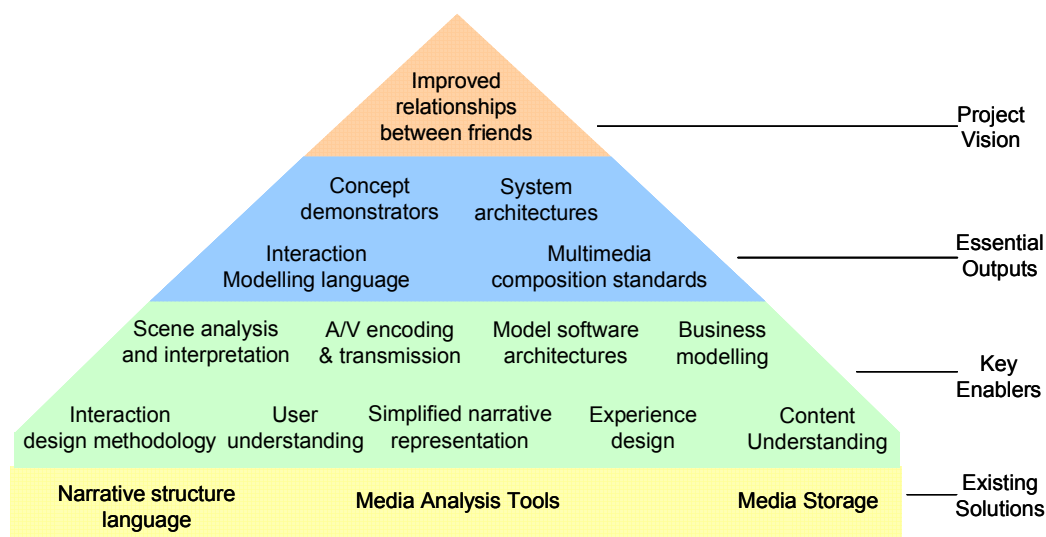
TA2 project objectives

We hope that, just as a rope is made strong by repeatedly twisting together fibres, the outputs from TA2 will be made robust because of the way we are 'twisting together' the insights from different disciplines.

Crucial items on the technology side are *low delay audio and video components*, which will make communication interaction as natural as possible; *complex and dynamic screen composition*, to make the visual representation of the interaction compelling; and *personalisation of the media elements*, to give the intimacy of annotation we enjoy with a felt tip pen and a magazine

The success of the interaction design and of the technology, in the eyes of users, will be tested through field trials of the concept demonstrators. Such anecdotal analysis will also be positioned against a wider market analysis, which is important to ensure that the technologies and concepts emerging from TA2 are developed with knowledge of the wider market, rather than in a research vacuum. We are confident that this thorough approach provides TA2 with the greatest chances of achieving eventual societal impact.

The TA2 concept demonstrators

Five initial concept demonstrators are being developed to showcase the TA2 system.

- Family Game – a game experience that can be enjoyed by several groups of people in different locations
- Child's play – an experience allowing young people to share and show off
- Sixth age – a simple card-based game allowing interaction and communications across the generations
- My Videos – a means of collaboratively composing and personally sharing interactive videos
- The connected lobby – a means of allowing users to easily commence one of the experiences above by providing the essential means to connect the remote locations

As examples we explain the two demonstrators "Family Game" and "My Videos" a bit more in detail.

For the **Family Game** we have chosen to adapt a board game called "Space Alert". This board game is about defending a spaceship against attacks from meteorites or extraterrestrial spaceships. The project will implement this game in the TA2 system in a way it can be played remotely between two or more parties in a fully natural way, as if the parties were together in one room.

Team A playing "Space Alert" remotely on the TA2 system

First implementation of the system is planned by the end of 2009

MyVideos is an application which supports the creation and publishing of personalised videos. It is ideal for creating personalised videos from multiple sources; imagine that there is a school concert where several people shoot personal videos, take photos or record the sound. With MyVideos it will be possible to prepare a personalised video utilising all these inputs in an intelligent and semi-automated way, and in addition create your own narrative story around it.

School concert recorded by different means and people, turned into a personalised media with own story, shared with family members or friends

First implementations of the system are planned by the end of 2009

Low delay audio and video are crucial components for natural communications

Natural audio and video are crucial for natural remote communications. The TA2 system seeks to provide audio and video quality and delays which allow the separated parties on both ends to talk to each other as if they were in the same room, using (as far as possible) low cost consumer grade components . TA2 is exploring the impact of low delay, spatial sound (so you can hear where the other speaking party is located) and perfect echo cancellation on the end users perception of the communication.

TA2 partner Fraunhofer IIS is leading the development of this system within the TA2 project. Early stage demonstrators were demonstrated very successfully in March this year at the German ICT exhibition "Cebit"

For more information please see the related press release
http://www.ta2-project.eu/pressreleases/pressreleases.html

TA2 at conferences – award winning theme

TA2 has been very active at international conferences and work carried out within TA2 has won three "best paper awards". Some of the papers are shown in the table below (for a full overview please visit http://www.ta2-project.eu/conferences/conferences.html)

3 June 2009	Workshop dedicated to "Enhancing Social Communication and Belonging by Integrating TV Narrativity and Game-Play" at EuroITV 2009, Leuven
20 May 2009	Managing ICT projects in FP7 - Best practices from TA2, Training seminar, Heidelberg, Germany, organised by Eurescom
3-8 March 2009	Stand at Cebit 2009 by TA2 partner Fraunhofer IIS on low delay spatial audio
25-27 November 2008	Networking Session on "Managing ICT projects in FP7 – exchange of best practices"
27 October - 1 November 2008	"Enhancing Social Sharing of Videos: Fragment, Annotate, Enrich, and Share" ACM Multimedia Conference 2008, Vancouver, Canada, P. Cesar, CWI **Best paper award**
22-24 October 2008	"Introduction to User Experience Design for Interactive TV" UXTV08 Conference , Silicon Valley, P. Cesar, CWI
7-9 October 2008	"Supporting Group Relationships in Mediated Domestic Environments" "Games, Gaming and Gamers - Understanding Game Research" Mindtrek Conference, Tampere, Finland, P. Ljungstrand, S. Björk, Interactive Institute
16-19 September 2008	"Enabling adaptive time-based web applications with SMIL state". ACM symposium on Document engineering 2008, Sao Paulo, J. Jansen, D.C.A. Bulterman, CWI **Best paper award**
10-12 September 2008	ITU-T workshop on "From Speech to Audio: bandwidth extension, binaural perception", Lannion, France, P. Hughes, BT
2-4 July 2008	"Usages of the Secondary Screen in an Interactive Television Environment: Control, Enrich, Share, and Transfer Television Content", EuroITV 2008 Conference, Salzburg, P. Cesar, D.C.A. Bulterman, A.J. Jansen, CWI **Best paper award**

About TA2

TA2 is a large-scale Integrating Project of the ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) Work Programme under the European Community's 7th Framework Programme (FP7). It was submitted to the first call of FP7 and addresses objective 1.5 ("Networked Media") under challenge 1 ("Pervasive and Trusted Network and Service Infrastructures").

The project is partly funded by the European Commission.

TA2 is running from February 2008 to January 2012. Its overall budget is about 18 million euro.

13 partners from 7 European countries are involved in the project.

Further information is available at: http://www.ta2-project.eu

The next TA2 Newsletter is scheduled for April 2010