

End user involvement in bottom up 'grassroots' innovation

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It is widely accepted within UCD that user involvement can enhance the software development process. In recent years bottom up 'grass-roots' (bottom up) innovation has emerged as an important source of new products and services within a diverse range of application areas. A detailed interview and workshop methodology was used to study the innovative process and practices of 16 novel, ICT-based innovations within transport, that have emerged from grass-roots (non top-down) initiatives. The results show that there was little, if any, explicit user requirements analysis, and limited application of established UCD methods. The emphasis of these innovators was to develop services that were relatively usable, launch these to as wider audience as possible, and then to iterate based on user feedback. However, there was little *active soliciting* of user feedback, or proactive targeting of users for evaluative involvement. The conclusions are that grass-roots innovators are a valuable source of new ideas within transport due to their immersion in the problem space and motivation to innovate. However UCD methods need to be better promoted to these groups – taking into account their innovation practices, and should also be more effectively disseminated to other user-focused academic disciplines.

Keywords: UCD, user involvement, user centred design, grass-roots innovation, bottom up innovation