



Experts, Citizens and Digital Natives on the Future of Internet

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Swiss Centre for Technology Assessment TA-SWISS

- is a Centre for Excellence of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
- has supported (political) decision making related to new technologies since 1992
- evaluates technologies by “classical” TA studies involving scientific analysis and expert discussions
- evaluates technologies by participative methods involving lay people.

Episode 0: « Once upon in a time in 2007 »

- The «Web 2.0» is something new (blogs, YouTube, Facebook, twitter,...)
- TA-SWISS staff proposes to its Advisory Board to have a closer look at the participatory turn of the Internet:
 - What are the technologies, the applications?
 - Who is using them and how?
 - What are the social, economical and political implications?
- Expert workshop to better define the scope of a TA project on the Future of Internet with:
 - Scientists (computer sciences, sociology, anthropology)
 - Representatives of ministries (IT & communication department)
 - Journalist
 - Lawyers

The script

Episode 1

The challenges

- An easy to read brochure
- How Internet impacts on work, education, politics and leisure?
- Open questions for the next modules.

Episode 2

Experts views

- Experts interviews
- How and where is Internet evolving?
- What are the challenges?

Episode 3

Citizen dialogue

- Public hearing of experts on issues raised by citizens
- Citizens deliberate
- Citizens make recommendations for policy-makers

The actors

Accompanying group

Role: expertise; independence; network

Profile: scientists, stakeholders, professionals

Project manager

TA-SWISS
staffer

Episodes

Brochure

Journalist

Interviews

Experts
Journalist

Dialogue

35 citizens
Internauts
Experts
Facilitators
Journalist

The critique

- **Episode 1 (Brochure)**
 - Very good basis document
 - Good collaboration between the journalist, the accompanying group and the project manager
- **Episode 2 (experts interviews)**
 - Variety of experts -> different views and opinions
 - A lot about the present, not much about the future
- **Episode 3 (citizen dialogue)**
 - Difficult to collect citizens questions/inputs via Internet
 - Comprehensive and balanced hearings
 - Very few young people

Future of Internet: «Season 2»

Discussions in the accompanying group, Advisory Boards
and TA-staff:

- How to communicate / deliver recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders?
- What about the «digital natives»?

Season 2, the script and the actors

Season 2, Episode 1 The workshop

- Public workshop
- Citizens present their recommendations
- Panel discussion with policy-makers and stakeholders about the recommendations (facilitation by a TV journalist)

Season 2, Episode 2 Digital natives

- Focus groups with 100 schoolchildren (17-19 years old)
- Moderators facilitate the discussions
- A journalist writes a report

Season 2, the critique

- **Episode 1 (The workshop)**
 - Stakeholders and policy-makers didn't listen to what the citizens had to say
 - Facilitator put the citizens on trial
- **Episode 2 (digital natives)**
 - A very good complement to the citizen dialogue
 - Not easy to have schoolchildren to discuss

Conclusions

- A comprehensive project involving a variety of actors
- A same thematic from different perspectives
- A modular structure in order to cope with the rapid changes of the Internet (start of the project: 2009 – end of the project: 2012)
- A stable framework (accompanying group, same project manager, advisory board)
- Difficult to get a fair and open dialogue between citizens and policy-makers / stakeholders.