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Dialogue cafes and individual interviews with elderly as methods for user participation in technology development

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Introduction: The European Union has declared the ageing of society as one of the future grand challenges, and access to enabling technologies is one important strategy for meeting this challenge. Including elderly in the technology development is important to address user requirements and succeed in technology up-take. The Assisted Living Project (2016-2020) engages different stakeholders through "Responsible Research and Innovation" (RRI) methodology which imply a user centered iterative technology development process.

Objectives: The aims are twofold; to investigate elderlys' needs for technology that can promote independent living and quality of life, and to develop novel technological solutions as results of user participation and co-production.

Method: The study took place at a CARE+ seniors' home, and 19 residents participated in several dialogue cafes and individual interviews during 2016 and 2017. The dialogue cafes were organized as group discussion around specific topics introduced by scenarios. All transcribed interviews and field-notes created basis for a thematic analysis.

Results: Preliminary findings showed that the elderly stressed the importance of being independent, self-sufficient, and in control over own life. They wished to remain active and feared that relying on help from others or a system may cause deterioration of their cognitive ability. Further, we found a certain willingness to trade-off privacy for better safety.

Conclusion: Dialogue cafes, which was highly appreciated by the elderly, and individual interviews have so far proved an efficient and creative way for engaging elderly, presenting ideas and thoughts, stimulate peer learning, and for understanding and discussing both challenges and solutions.