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# Flirting and the web: the case study of Luxusbuerg

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## Abstract

This presentation aims to analyze the user's role in reshaping and redefining a participatory platform in the early years of the Internet. It will focus on the case study of Luxusbuerg, a chat network specific to Luxembourg that was created in 1996 as a channel on the Undernet IRC (International Relay Chat) Network. The channel's success led the owners to develop their local server in 1999.

First created to interact with people living in the same country, it evolved into a web chat with different channels adapted to the users' interests. The most popular one was #flirt.

Based on oral interviews and web archives via the Wayback Machine, the case study will focus on the analysis of these three elements inherent to Luxusbuerg:

1. Asses the user role in redesigning the platform utilities (Latzko-Toth, 2008), for example, the flirting use gaining increasing space. In Luxusbuerg, the users influenced the construction of the platform.
2. Analyze how the user experience evolved, from a generic to a flirting chat, although it was not exclusive to flirting. The owners explained how in 1999, they decided to create different channels with the primary objective of separating the "flirting" use from other uses of the chat to keep the spirit of the hardcore users from the beginning. "It became so much about flirting that it was not possible anymore to run anything else in one single channel," explains Raoul Mulheims, one of the creators of Luxusbuerg, in an oral interview. Years later, in 2002, they had to go further and create the channel #adultflirt to separate teenagers from adults.
3. Study how the hybrid model, combining online chat with offline events, and what Guillaume Latzko-Toth (1998) called "tribus IRC," affected the evolution of flirting. Related to this hybrid participatory community created by Luxusbuerg since its inception, we will analyze how anonymity -one of the main characteristics observed in the success of flirting in web chats by Julia Velkovska (2002); and Josiane Jouët (2012)- or the lack of it affected the evolution of the #flirt channel in Luxusbuerg. Although the users were pseudonymized by their nicknames, they could participate later in the parties and gatherings organized by the channel administrators.

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