

2021.04.13 Pedro Parraguez (Thirdroom 'Konsulent', Dataverz 'Co-founder og CEO')

Transskribering: Andreas Madsen Hammer

00:01 Stefan: OK, so my first question is I would like to ask you to shortly present your position. An involvement with the project called Thirdroom.

00:13 Pedro: Sure, so I guess we started working with Alfred in [inaudible] or quite a few years ago. I will say maybe six years ago, but it was kind of a broad collaboration and it changes because I was doing research in my phd and then postdoc in complex technical systems and [inaudible] I had analyzed networks of researchers and networks of people working in engineering project. So, some of the tools and approaches that I was using kind of made a lot of sense for Alfred intuitively, although he came from a more qualitative background and I was coming from a quantitative background. The sort of things that we were doing were very similar, so I just. The involvement indirectly with Thirdroom started that way and it later on it was more than Thirdroom probably in the context of Roskilde University, it was through Hello Science and [inaudible], right? So yeah, so we started looking into that in the moment where Hello Sciences issue was transitioning into the new model that has to I connection essentially with the Thirdroom, you can say probably point of view of the what what Alfred something called like the engine room or or the the back end because the share, of course, a number of things.

01:49 Stefan: Right, and in the extension to this, I'm curious how would you describe your specific this specific expertise that you are bringing to the Thirdroom project?

02:00 Pedro: I mean, it's mostly on the part of data analytics and to a certain extent also information visualization and on the side of data analytics, it's essentially what some people describe as recommendation engines, which is essentially how do you analyze data about people about projects and all sort of things that happen in the network to provide suggestions and to connect them essentially also with external inputs. So, with Thirdroom, we're just in the process of starting to turn some things that have been tried out in the context of Hello Science that makes sense for Thirdroom universities such as Roskilde University, but the process is not live yet, so you won't see on the platform at the moment. And there are lots of things that are happening in the background. Then hopefully during this year will have incremental rollouts.

03:12 Stefan: So, this leads me naturally to my next question which is concerning. What kind of value machine learning slash AI is going to bring into Thirdroom? But you already started describing these, you know recommendations, basically in recommendation functionalities. But if we extend this question, have you and the Thirdroom group been considering all the different user groups that potentially could use Thirdroom and how they would need to be supported differently concerning these machine learning possibilities?

03:55 Pedro: I mean, broadly we have students and they are looking into things such as finding a mentor or supervisors and just starting into the right people in the university or their projects.

Since the mold of Roskilde University is so much problem based, or challenge based. Having a more dynamic way of connecting those projects with what the university can offer, which is not necessarily obvious is important feature that we are working on. So, that is one part which is essentially how the students can connect and make better use of the stuff that is happening in university, and particularly research, right? The other group is mostly researchers themselves, and when it comes to research there are also loads of opportunity [inaudible] between researchers that are not obvious. For example, researchers working different groups. Or me, to researchers that need to get their way around because one of the common issues that we find in all universities really is that if you just look into the big search engines or the specialized search engines for a particular topic chances are the people that appear stop in the list will be somewhere else will be in your universe, right? So, that being local knowledge or these hyper local knowledge subtext is hard either. Funnily enough then kind of having an idea of the top of the world. So, we're trying to bridge that job so that this long tail of research that sometimes is next to you. I've had also research that happen across different disciplines because the language that people use between disciplines changes, but some sense the subject of study is the same. Use machine learning and other semantic technologies to kind of disambiguate some keywords or some topics of interest so that we can connect things that on paper, when you look at the keyword are different, but that have semantic clear very similar knowledge base. Or for example this [inaudible] goals. You can see them from many different the same goal can be seen from many different angles by and for people to understand that when they are working in, I don't know, water and sanitation projects there are also facets that they could tap into and make a project stronger, for example by means of connecting people from from different areas that's sometimes next door in the same building. That is something that we also see as very important and valid. And the last, well, that should be the last, but then there is the connection with between the university and industry, which is like how do you strengthen challenge-based education when it comes to trying to identify what the university can offer to [the] industry in the context of particular challenges that you get up into researchers but also student project. So, that's interphase industry university and finally, there is a connection between slightly less local knowledge which things are happening in Denmark and the university, so what happens between potential collaborations between, in this case, for example RUC and other universities in Denmark. Because there is a larger ecosystem that you could tap into. So, those are some of the factors that we're trying to explore one by one. Some of these, some share the same data and some have different data sources. So, we are working in different things, that ultimately share the same idea of recommendation engines and all sort of thing about [inaudible]. What are you able to do and what the data says that you might be able to do these on your position in a network of topics, themes and all sort of things related with knowledge essentially.

09:03 Stefan: Yeah, interesting so you describe like students, researchers, industry and then the connection between universities. And then there's like a common part of the functionality can be used across all these areas, but there is also you're looking to develop specific things within those different ones. Is that correct?

09:25 Pedro: Yes, I mean some things will be visible more directly on the front end of Thirdroom because if you are a student then you are doing at and you're writing details about your project then to have a hint about potentially interesting researchers in RUC or research, right? So that is more front end directly in the context of what you're doing in Thirdroom. Other things can happen a little bit in the background which is for example for the university

management there are some things about the understanding of collaboration opportunities that may be, and this is something that we're still [inaudible], maybe it does not need to be so much in the front end of Thirdroom, but can happen in the context of a dashboard. For example, right now where I mean it won't be accessible for the people, because also for the majority of people. But I mean, we're still thinking about different opportunities to make available this insight without overcrowding the platform without making it so that it's overly complicated or people get confused. It's a fine balance between giving more information that is useful that just making it so that people get more confused, right? And then more eliminated, so...

11:03 Stefan: Right, is there another category also that you think about, for example, the university RUC administration? Would that be separate also?

11:16 Pedro: Certain things more right, but it doesn't mean that necessarily it's exclusive for them. So, for example, these collaboration opportunities for researchers. On the one hand, they may want to orchestrate some things or put resources into a new collaborations, and so they need to have that overview. But for a researcher, you know more and more [on an] individual level. It's also interesting to see. OK, you know I have these angles where I could collaborate with [inaudible] that they are working at CVS or

12:03 Stefan: Interesting, Alfred told me about, I think it was you he mentioned that you are in the process or maybe have finished like indexing RUC's database of research, something like this.

12:21 Pedro: So, we have a working consortium that works at the level of the entire Danish research system. We have put together some information and this is the what was called the Opera Nora consortium that essentially covers all Danish universities. We have put together something that is this called Nora and it's online already and that provides an overview of research across the board in Denmark. A we are working into how to get higher resolution information directly from what it's called like the pure system in Roskilde University so that we can use this information, that I mean researchers put a lot of effort into making available, but it's not necessarily so actively used, right? So we want to make sure that all this reporting and documentation is both internal, but also in this admin systems can be put to to use in a way that is not for you know, like I like a typically you see other platforms thinking about marketing opportunities. Well, this is obviously not the thing that we're doing. We're focusing on collaboration opportunities and ways of solving challenges, right?

13:58 Stefan: And, so now I'm more like practical programming question, you could say. There's a process going or a planning now a shift from WordPress based Thirdroom to a Laravel based Thirdroom. Could you describe shortly what are the new possibilities?
With this new shift into this new platform, why? Why, yeah, and you understand my question, yeah?

14:27 Pedro: We're not involved directly in that shift because we work at a different layer of the architecture, so it wouldn't be fair for me to make like detailed comments on that. Not being a person working with that which is Jens who has been working for awhile now and then [inaudible] is that in a way when you are not so dependent on a framework like WordPress that is great to start fast, right? But that in a way creates more of a code burden because you since you cannot start so easily from the scratch, and anything that you want to do like highly

personalized or you want to scale in a different direction unless you are feeding what the WordPress-base had in mind then you are more limited. When you start with something like Laravel, essentially you can start fully from scratch in the direction that you feel is the one that makes most sense for the platform. So, in a way it has to do with the scalability that has to do with flexibility, right? And this is why I understand without, I'm not the best person to comment on the details.

15:56 Stefan: It makes sense to kind of build the prototype in something more accessible and then yeah. The last question is, do we have any idea what the time frame is concerning not Laravel, but more these AI slash machine learning capabilities. I imagine they are going to, that you plan to put them in together with the Laravel update? But I'm guessing here.

16:20 Pedro: Well, I mean it will be something that will be ongoing during this year. Those two significant changes towards the end of the year, but with all of these rollouts you often don't roll out into production right away, right? So essentially you wait and be having a stable version before kind of transitioning all the users into the new version. So, I expect to see quite a few internal development versions during the year. Probably they will have some people that will be invited to test them and write feedback and all that. But I don't think there will be a rollout that will be for the complete base of users and so soon, because it won't be so much of a good idea, yeah.

17:29 Stefan: Yeah, if you do it too early...

17:30 Pedro: And sometimes of validation and everything.