

Awareness of Copernicus

It is almost 4 months since I last posted - apologies for the long wait!

Yesterday, I was at the Imagine 2014 conference organised by Eurogi. This year is their 20th anniversary and for us it is 25 years since EARSC was formed. Over lunch, Eurogi had invited EARSC and 3 other organisations all celebrating an anniversary this year to make a short speech at their jubilee celebration. It was a simple but nice occasion. I spoke of the changes we have seen in the industry over the last 25 years and how all aspects of imagery (temporal resolution, spatial resolution, spectral resolution) have improved. Recently we have seen new initiatives being launched from Skybox, Planetlabs and others and new technology and new business models are changing the sector completely; I wonder what it will look like in a further 25 years?

Afterwards I was member of a panel discussing the user uptake of Copernicus. The one really strong message that came out was about awareness. The GI experts attending the conference wondered where they could get data from Copernicus, what it looks like, what can be done with it? These are intermediate users with a knowledge of the sector including satellite data. If they are bemused about these questions then there really needs to be a massive awareness campaign about Copernicus and what it can offer. Reflecting on this afterwards with another expert, we discussed the fact that a commercial operator with a new satellite system in orbit would be sending out their sales-force to all their customers and executing a large and targeted marketing campaign. The EC should consider the same for Copernicus - but maybe using the value-adding community as the sales-force?

If we consider that companies could be doing this already then that probably would be the case except that they still have concerns about how much they can be involved (as addressed in our last position paper). Investment is needed in awareness raising. Industry would be doing this if they saw a clear business opportunity. Amid their doubts about their ability to really exploit Copernicus this cannot happen.