



Chapter XVII

Citizen-Centered Environmental Information Dissemination via Multiple Information Channels

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Abstract

Citizens call for timely and high-quality environmental information for reasons of awareness and personal well-being. Only an informed citizen will be in the position to participate in urban environment decision making and planning. This interest recommends an easy-to-understand and easy-to-access presentation of such up-to-date information. Rather than

presenting raw data in an extensive fashion, one ought to engineer customizable information services that can be tailored to individual user groups, be it for reasons of content or be it for reasons of citizen's ease of access. APNEE has designed information services that draw upon various information channels, such as mobile technologies, interactive portals for the Internet, as well as street panels for municipality usage scenarios. In a nutshell, the APNEE system promotes user-friendly information management and dissemination services via multiple information channels, effectively combining information content and service providing schemes. This dissemination platform can be applied not only to the environmental sector but also in multiple information domains. Based on the APNEE approach, environmental information turns into an attractive product (electronic information service).

Introduction

Citizens are getting more and more concerned to be aware of the environmental terms of their everyday life and the environmental pressures that they are exposed to. They request for adequate levels of environmental information service quality, in order to play a crucial role in relevant decision-making and planning, be it at an individual or community level. This is well reflected in one of the five top priorities of the sixth environment action program of the European Community (CEC, 2001), which involves the empowerment of people as private citizens and the attempt to change their perception of environmental issues. Their effective involvement in decision-making presupposes that full definitions and an understanding of environmental problems as well as certain ways of resolution and contribution are provided. Therefore, environmental information, including indicators and maps, can serve as a driver in this direction. Some proposed actions include the improvement of public accessibility to this kind of information and the preparation of new user-friendly toolkits for information perception that will change one's environmental behavior. Systems for more efficient gathering, modelling and forecasting of environmental information is another noteworthy action of the EU programme that thus reinforces the need for designing new citizen-centered information services.

This chapter reports on a citizen-centered approach for the dissemination of information on air quality in APNEE (Böhler et al., 2001). APNEE deliberately promotes an active stance for the dissemination of information in order to reach the citizen in a variety of individual circumstances by utilizing a set of telecommunication technologies. In addition, the provision of individualized presentations

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