Chapter 14

A Citizen–Centric Platform to Support Networking in the Area of E–Democracy

Francesco Molinari
ALTEC S.A. Thessaloniki, Greece

Christopher Wills
Kingston University, UK

Adamantios Koumpis
ALTEC S.A. Thessaloniki, Greece

Vasiliki Moumtzi
ALTEC S.A. Thessaloniki, Greece

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter describes experiences acquired during the research work conducted as part of the European Project Tell Me (www.tellmeproject.eu). The project envisaged to support the pan-European creation of Living Labs as new forms of cooperation between government, enterprises, citizens and academia for a successful transfer of e-Government, e-Democracy and e-Services state-of-the art applications, solutions, know-how and best practices. In this chapter the authors explore the potential of providing an existing system (DEMOS) allowing moderated and goal-oriented discourses between citizens and policy makers to become parts of open-ended ventures on the creation of collaborative networks for Electronic Democracy. This work would also recommend that this form of support network elevates e-Democracy of a country and thus improves e-governance systems at the grass roots.

ORGANIZATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

After the "Helsinki Manifesto" (2006) put the "human-centric way" at the very centre of the measures needed "for turning the Lisbon Strategy (2000) into a living reality", the topic of competitiveness and innovation in Europe has been enriched of a further dimension, namely, co-creative collaboration with the forthcoming users of the developing products and services.

A Citizen-Centric Platform to Support Networking in the Area of E-Democracy

This is especially useful in the field of (private and Government) e-Services, where the people can be considered as "twice" beneficiaries, namely of public services as such – impacting per se on their lives and businesses – and of ICT based or supported services, where the question becomes to which extent this novel user-centric approach can improve customization (if not "tailoring") to individual needs and requirements.

Some "champions" of this new dimension of innovation belong to the so-called ENoLL – European Network of Living Labs. In a purely business perspective, a Living Lab can be seen as a service providing organization in the topic of R&D and innovation, based on the "co-creation" concept, which focuses on people in their daily living environments as active, if not decisive, contributors to products and services design, development and testing.

In spite of a limited evidence on the known experiences – most of which could count on a significant external funding - it can be affirmed that the cost of building up and maintaining a Living Lab from scratch (i.e. deploying the communication and collaboration infrastructure, gathering and orchestrating the community of users, carrying out the requested evaluation services) can be substantial, thus preventing a long-term impact into the regional innovation systems.

Here is where the Tell Me project initiative starts up. Through the adaptation of a service already operational in Germany and other European Countries, originally thought for the animation of democratic discussions and participative public opinion formation at local and regional level, establishes a solution for the networking and interaction of Living Lab trials participants during the development and implementation of innovative projects. More specifically, the Tell Me objectives were to investigate the administrative viability of the service on a European scale and to identify the conditions for future, pan-European deployment of the service under a juridical and a financial perspective.

The service is based on an existing ICT infrastructure for moderated and goal-oriented discourses involving citizens and political institutions as well as project developers and investors, at national and European level.

The users who tested the service during the pilot phase of the Tell Me project fall into two categories:

a. Living Lab 'Owners' (as their staff validated the services from the technical and administrative point of view and assess their viability and usability);

b. Living Lab 'Members' (Public Administrations, Citizens, Enterprises, Non Profit Organisations, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of these services), mostly operating in the same territorial areas, but also coming from different cities/countries. After each trial/pilot, the results were analyzed with a view to mapping the most relevant application areas and to replicating the service in one or more additional Living Labs in order to align the service to the national regulations (if any) and activate cross-fertilization among the Living Labs through the exchange of *best practices* at European level.

In light of the above, the main purpose of this work is to provide a Trans-European service integrated with a proven methodology that can enable a co-creative user driven e-Democracy service development. Most important is the fact that the service can "link together" the different stakeholders in order to let them work more efficiently, establishing an intimate communication channel between participants in a region. Besides, what is crucial is to increase the availability of easier-to-use e-Government applications that have been validated in advance through online interaction with the potential users. This will potentially enlarge the scope for public sector innovation in Europe.

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/citizen-centric-platform-support-networking/46479

Related Content

Mining Generalized Web Data for Discovering Usage Patterns
Doru Tanasa (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1275-1281).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/mining-generalized-web-data-discovering/10986

Fostering Participatory Literacies in English Language Arts Instruction Using Student-Authored Podcasts
Molly Buckley-Marudasand Charles Ellenbogen (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 20-39).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/fostering-participatory-literacies-in-english-language-arts-instruction-using-student-authored-podcasts/237411

Facial Recognition
Rory A. Lewisand Zbigniew W. Ras (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 857-862).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/facial-recognition/10920

Data Mining and the Text Categorization Framework
Paola Cerchiello (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 394-399).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-mining-text-categorization-framework/10850

Control-Based Database Tuning Under Dynamic Workloads
Yi-Cheng Tuand Gang Ding (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 333-338).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/control-based-database-tuning-under/10841