

Chapter 100

Citizens Collaboration and Co-Creation in Public Service Delivery: The COCKPIT Project

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ABSTRACT

Governments are striving to deliver more efficient and effective public services in order to achieve better public service quality, with reduced waiting times, improved cost effectiveness, higher productivity and more transparency. It's an issue of doing things in new ways that requires fundamental change in the provision of public services in the future and a complete new approach for Governments to work and interact with their citizens. Currently, Societies witness more than ever that Web 2.0 and social media in particular, constitute the emerging, if not already established, mass collaboration and cooperation platform between citizens and administrations, as the latter have started to realise the benefits of such applications. The COCKPIT project builds on these developments and based on a highly synergetic approach aims to define a new Governance model for the next generation public service delivery, by combining various research areas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, we are witnessing the set-up of a service driven world at a global level and with a very quick pace. Globalization, increased automation of procedures and universal establishment of Internet technologies are the main driving forces behind this phenomenon. The innovation enclosed in this new approach is the involvement of the end customer (which can be a citizen, a business or a governmental organization) in the service delivery procedure. At the same time, engaging the citizens in decision making is gradually proving to be a new way to overcome long-lasting symptoms of democratic deficit in modern societies, such as the declining voter turnout, the reluctance to publicly state one's opinion, or the diminishing participation in public debate within political parties (Demo-Net, 2006). The notion of Web 2.0 seems to be one of the main ways this can be achieved. Web 2.0 represents a new wave of internet-based applications, relying on the concept of user as a producer, that have been launched with very little investment and have had a disruptive impact on the social life of people, as well as on industries such as advertising and media (Vossen & Hagemann, 2007). Having realised this new trend and its benefits, governments have already started to reorganize their processes and change their arteriosclerotic and single-minded approach on public services' delivery. The more governments realize the importance of public participation, even in this new form, the more they are trying to re-engage citizens in the political processes in order to strengthen democracy (Charalabidis et al., 2008). Especially considering the global economic crisis influencing every decision that governments take, increased effectiveness and efficiency along with lower budgets is what governments seek for. Individuals (e.g., citizens, businesses) can now be seen not only as simple spectators, but mostly like active participants, collaborators and creators (Benington, 2010). This can aid service

providers achieve customer-oriented services and, when focusing on public sector, improved performance, transparent government and more decentralized and meritocratic management of employees (OECD, 2005). At the same time, such an open approach will bring together citizens and their governments, increasing transparency and regaining the lost trust of citizens to their elected representatives and the public servants.

In spite of the intense research ongoing regarding open innovation at a corporate level, there is quite limited research examining open innovation strategies in the context of government (Fuglsang, 2008; Feller et al., 2010; Nam, 2010). Policy makers and public service theorists are talking about delivery of public services either at domestic or international level (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003; Bourgon, 2007). Putting aside the initial approach that talked about only cutting costs, new, more innovative and sophisticated approaches realize that public service delivery creates value; value that is not only restricted to financial balance, but incorporates user satisfaction and can be assessed only with the active engagement of the end user (Freedland & Sciarra, 1998; Moore, 1995; Horner et al., 2006; Benington, 2010). Nevertheless, it would be a great mistake to overlook the fact that public services, from the initial design phase to their final delivery, come with an important financial cost; a cost that, indirectly, is shouldered by the taxpayer. Therefore, it is quite important for governments to establish a continuous feedback retrieving mechanism for realising the needs and hearing the opinions of their citizens, who at the end of the day are their customers.

Along those lines, the fundamental idea of COCKPIT Project (<http://www.cockpit-project.eu/>) is that Web 2.0 social media constitute the emerging and de facto mass collaboration platform between citizens themselves, and between citizens and public administrations. Web 2.0 social media have in a very short time established themselves as a very effective means for creating and sharing

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