

Chapter 8.17

mCity:

User Focused Development of Mobile Services Within the City of Stockholm

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the mCity Project, a project owned by the City of Stockholm, aiming at creating user-friendly mobile services in collaboration with businesses. Starting from the end-users' perspective, mCity focuses on how to satisfy existing needs in the community, initiating test pilots within a wide range of areas, from health care and education, to tourism and business. The lesson learned is that user focus creates involvement among end users and leads to the development of sustainable systems that are actually used after they have been implemented. This is naturally vital input not only to municipalities and governments but also for the IT/telecom industry at large. Using the knowledge from mCity, the authors suggest a new, broader definition of "m-government" which focuses on mobile people rather than mobile technology.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, ICT technologies are used to an increasing extent within the public sector. For cities, ICTs not only provide the possibilities of improving the efficiency among its employees and its service towards tourists, citizens, and companies; it is also an important factor in the development of the city and its region, as ICTs today generally are considered to constitute the driving force of economy and social change (Castells, 1997). It is also argued that ICTs can improve efficiency, enhance transparency, control, networking and innovation (Windén, 2003). Thus, several cities are involved in projects concerning the development, testing, and implementation of ICTs. A few examples include Crossroads Copenhagen in Denmark, Testbed Botnia, and TelecomCity from the cities of Luleå and Karlskrona in

Sweden. Within all these projects, triple-helix like organizations are used involving the local municipality or national government, the local university, and the locally-based companies (Jazic & Lundevall, 2003)

Also within the City of Stockholm, there is such a project—the mCity Project. This was launched by the City of Stockholm in January of 2002, with the aim of organizing “the mobile city” through the implementation of relevant ICTs. The mCity Project consists of several small pilot projects, focusing on identifying needs in the community and creating solutions to these. In this chapter, we intend to describe this project, its organization, work processes, and the results. We also discuss the experiences made and how the project can serve as an inspiration towards a broader understanding of “m-government”.

BRIEFLY ABOUT THE CITY OF STOCKHOLM

The City of Stockholm is Sweden’s largest municipality with about 760,000 inhabitants,¹ but is, compared to other capitals in the world, a small city. Due to the Swedish form of government, Stockholm—as well as all other Swedish cities—has large responsibilities, including child care, primary and secondary education, care of the elderly, fire-fighting, city planning, and maintenance, and so forth. All these responsibilities are financed through income taxes, at levels set by the cities themselves, with no national interference. The operational responsibility lies, in the case of Stockholm, on 18 district councils and on 16 special administrations, depending on the issue. Through 15 different fully-owned or majority-interest, joint-stock and associated companies (hereafter called “municipal companies”), the City of Stockholm also provides water, optical fibre-infrastructure, housing (the City of Stockholm has the largest housing corporation in the country), shipping-facilities (the ports in the

Stockholm area), parking, tourist information, the city theatre, the Globe Arena (for sports, concerts and other events) etc. In total, the city has an organization comprising 50,000 employees, and a yearly turn over of 31.5 billion SEK,² which is equivalent to about 5 million USD. For the City of Stockholm, it is only natural to engage in ICT projects of different kinds, as this could be expected to have both financial and pedagogical benefits within this large organization—just as it had for other public organizations in Sweden (Grenblad, 2003).

In fact, ICT projects are encouraged by the City of Stockholm through the Stockholm “E-Strategy”. This is a visionary and strategic document, issued by the City Council³ in the beginning of 2001 which—among other things—firmly states the role of the citizen as the central figure for all activities in the city organization; the development of mobile technologies to enhance flexibility, as well as the importance of the city acting to aid Swedish ICT industry (*The City of Stockholm’s E-Strategy, 19th of February 2001*). It is the City Executive Board⁴ which is responsible for implementing the resolution of the City Council, but the “E-Strategy” document also points to the responsibility of the management of the different district councils, special administrations, and municipal companies for the strategic development of ICTs within each organization. The document also describes the function of “the IT Council”, which is to ensure that the e-strategy is implemented in a good way within the municipal organization, that is, not as a separate strategy, but in close contact with the activities for which the organizations are responsible.

BACKGROUND, ORGANIZATION, AND GOALS

The idea of mCity was born in 2000 when the former EU Commissioner Martin Bangeman suggested a cooperation between European cities

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