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Empowering Citizens to Make Meaningful Use of Open Data

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Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

Hack The Government! Empowering Citizens to Make Meaningful Use of Open Data

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Abstract: Citizens' use of Open Data is often limited to the use of apps. The design of the (app based) public service as well as the interpretation of the data is done for them. The organization of local hackathons can promote citizens' data literacy and better use of available Open Data for service transformation purposes. This promises to nicely combine citizen intelligence with participatory innovation with and by public service beneficiaries as the "next wave" of inclusive (e-)Government practice. In the proposed workshop, we simulate the organization and dynamics of a Hackathon based on the evidence at hand.

Keywords: hackathons, Open Data, public service innovation, inclusive Government, citizen participation

1. Topic

Although a large quantity of data is being made available by public administrations in open form, the usability and utility of those datasets heavily depend on the file format attributed by the publishing organisation on the one hand, and the possibility to generate meaningful applications out of the published data on the other. As usability and/or utility are not that often guaranteed, this prevents Open Data from becoming a new Commons, a valuable public resource that support a new generation of services.

However, we are aware that a growing number of experiences from both EU and non-EU cities and regions explicitly deal with these issues in a proactive manner, and the results documented therein confirm the intuition that once some specific barriers are removed, the value and potential

of Open Data can be seriously enhanced. The examples we have in mind have successfully realised the goal of letting citizens, not-for-profit organisations, public authorities, IT experts, start-up companies and many other stakeholders work together to the development of new services and applications based on Open Data. It is therefore important that the knowledge created by those experiences is more broadly disseminated and clearly understood – not only by IT experts or businesses, but also citizens and public administrations.

For this reason the Open4Citizens project is proposing this workshop as an opportunity to raise awareness about an emerging phenomenon – including, but not being limited to, Hack Days, Design Jams, Gov/Service Jams, ICT Living Labs and other similar forms of public-private interaction carried out at regional and City level in Europe and overseas.

2. Description and Objectives of the Workshop

2.1. What Will the Organizers Take Home

We would like to collect fresh evidence and inputs that support the definition of a best practice for participatory Open Data management and the joint definition of new applications for public services between governments and citizens.

2.2. What Will the Participants Take Home

The workshop aims at offering a proof-of-concept for the feasibility of Participatory Prototyping to finalise the use of Open Data as a resource for a new generation of public services. It also aims at providing an overview of available methodologies and strategies to support citizens' participation in the developent of such services.

3. Relevance of the Workshop to the CeDEM Conference

There is a perfect matching with the key topics of the conference (Open Data / Government and eParticipation / eDemocracy).

4. Questions to Be Addressed During the Workshop

The workshop will propose some crucial questions emerging from the Open4Citizens project:

- What are the best existing practices of citizen involvement in public service co-design around Europe and internationally?
- Particularly; what are the scope and potential of Hackathons and similar participatory forms of co-development of applications in the government domain?
- What are the most common issues emerging from the earliest cases?
- How can Hackathons or other forms of local participation be organized in order to support citizens' involvement in the creation of a new generation of public services?

5. Format of Workshop

We foresee the need of occupying one slot of 50 minutes in the following manner.

10′ – Introduction to the workshop and discussion of objectives

20′ – Group work simulating the organization and dynamics of a Hackathon

- Ideation phase
  - motivation and drivers
  - stakeholders to be engaged
  - planning and budgeting
  - resources and financing
- Preparation phase
  - venue and logistics
  - equipment and installations
  - catering and support services
  - third party involvement
- Execution phase
  - alternatives: The topic could be pre-defined, or defined by the audience.

20′ – Restitution of results (discussion and conclusions)

References

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About the Organisers

Francesco Molinari

Researcher on Frugal Government at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano (Italy), he holds a notable experience in the domains of eParticipation and Living Labs both at theoretical and pragmatic level. He is author of several papers and EU funded projects in those domains.

Grazia Concilio

Associate Professor in Urban Planning at Politecnico di Milano (Italy), she has been involved in several European Projects integrating Smart Cities and Participatory Service Design approaches in a Living Lab perspective. She is author of several international articles and publications on these themes.

Ingrid Mulder

Associate Professor of Design Techniques, Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology. Her expertise is in transformative and social design, using design techniques to empower people driving social change.

Louise Klitgaard Torntoft

Research assistant at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology of the University of Aalborg (Denmark), she is drawing on a relevant combination of interdisciplinary skills that help enable the empowerment of citizens to make more meaningful use of open data.

Marc Aguilar

Living Labs researcher at the i2cat Foundation, a Barcelona-based research and innovation center. His professional and research interests include: social entrepreneurship and innovation, qualitative market research, digital ethnography, user experience research, and futures studies.