

Summary of the Panel Discussion

"ICT for governance and policy modeling"*at EGOV2008, Torino/Italy—September 3rd, 2008*

The panel discussion "ICT for governance and policy modeling" results from the creation of a new and innovative research area which envisions that governments will mobilize communities by using social collaboration tools to share, disseminate and create new knowledge. The realization of this vision requires a "participation toolbox" which is closely connected to simulation and policy modeling technology for a real-time and comprehensive evaluation of policy directions. The objective of this panel is to present the state-of-the-art in these fields, which will be used as an input for the preparation of this research theme. Five panelists gave a short presentation, followed by in-depth discussions.

1. "ICT for governance & policy simulation The PICTO experience" by Enrico Ferro, ISMB / Politecnico Di Torino, Turin, Italy

Over the last years the multidisciplinary research team has been experimenting with the use of agent-based modeling in combination with classical analytical models for the simulation and testing of alternative broadband stimulation policies. The work conducted helped to understand the influence of policy-variables influencing the effectiveness of different policy actions. The simulations require the presence of complementary assets, such as a robust empirical knowledge base, as well as a variety of interpretative skills in order to reduce the risk of results misinterpretation.

2. "New Governance models: Lessons from the ITAIDE project" by Yao-Hua Tan, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Traditionally, Tax collection and Customs control are based on concept of demanding data of companies (push model) based on command and control governance. This is not only complicated, but also the main source of administrative burden for companies. New technology enables the creation of a strategic shift from a command-and-control to a trust-based, cooperative governance model. This is a data pull model which can reduce the administrative burden significantly and creates a shift in responsibilities. Companies need to convince the government that they are trustworthy and reliable by showing that they have sound procedures supporting information systems in place. For this reason there is an urgent need for a participative toolbox for collaborative policy development in the public sector, and demand for research on these new governance models.

3. "egosta-Framework: Good Governance & Stakeholder Involvement" by Josef Makolm, Federal Ministry of Finance, Austria

The basic idea of the egosta project is that existing e-Participation tools should be accomplished by tools for extracting, analyzing and clustering of information out of e-Participation artifacts. These tools can be used to generate added value from participation artifacts. In this way, new legislation will be realistic, feasible and the creation of additional administrative burden is avoided. Nevertheless participation is blocked by the complexity of the institutional system and by the fact that understanding laws is usually only possible for professionals. Semantic technologies and ontologies need to be developed for tracking and tracing of argumentations. This would result in transparent and understandable decision-making and in empowering and engaging a broader group of stakeholders.

4. "The challenges in PEPPOL's VCD" by Maria Wimmer, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany

The Virtual Company Dossier (VCD) is used to exchange information among tenderers and procurers in the tendering stage to improve the outcomes of the tendering process. A major issue in the VCD development is to understand which attestations and certificates will be shared across Europe among tenderers and companies, and with whom. Such a VCD requires harmonizing infrastructures and architectures within and among countries, as many of these attestations and certificates are owned by other government bodies or intermediaries. At the end, this would result in realistic and feasible tendering documents stimulating competitive bids. Participatory tools can be envisaged to allow collaborative development of the VCD specifications.

5. "Simulation and Animation for policy-making" by Marijn Janssen, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands

Development of valid simulation models requires specialized simulation technology and knowledge. Neglecting one element might easily result in a wrong assessment and in a wrong decision. Models can be developed based on reusable building blocks stored in a library. Building blocks enable the reuse of elements and in this way lower development cost. Furthermore, building blocks can enable the construction of new models by non-experts. Animation is necessary to enable participation of non-experts, involve policy-makers and discuss the possible impact of decisions. Animations need to be customized for the particular stakeholder group.

Conclusions and further actions

The panel unveiled the important need to better understand collaborative developments of policies and services in eGovernment and eParticipation and research technology. Semantics, ontology building processes, automatic metadata building, tracking and reasoning of argumentation, visualization, simulation, gaming and mixed reality technologies, participation technology, web 2.0 tools, prediction and assessment of policies, reusable building blocks libraries, and new governance models are needed to engage communities in policy-making and to further advance this field. Technology research which will be needed covers a number of important areas in which government and the public sector have very explicit needs.

The panelist and participants agreed concerning the multidisciplinary research need. There are opportunities and barriers for ICT for governance and policy-making. On the one hand the opportunities are related to the use of the Internet as easier, faster, and better ways of interacting to engage and empower stakeholders, the use of policy-models to enable transparent and better decision-making and the creation of new trust-based, cooperative governance models. Animation, games and virtual worlds contribute to the involvement and can be integrated with powerful simulation tools for the understanding, testing of policies resulting in better decisions and in a transparent government. New governance models are emerging, in which government structures and relationships are completely transformed and participation in public-private relationships is becoming the key to success. On the other hand, the possible barriers are related to the lowering of the threshold of user-involvement, finding, processing and using information, the understanding and visualization of argumentation lines, the creation of valid models and libraries of reusable building blocks which can be used to graphically construct models by non-expert.

The panel discussions shows that the call on ICT for Governance and Policy Modeling the Commission intends to launch represents a timely and needed action that may be considered as the stepping stone necessary to lift the European policy making activities to the "next" level of technology sophistication. A more informed decision making, community involvement and more effective policy actions are the results expected from such an initiative.

The next step is the ICT 2008 conference in Lyon, from 25 till 27 November. Three networking sessions will be organized in the field of 1. Government and Participation toolbox, 2. Policy modelling and simulation and 3. Architectures of eParticipation.