Chapter V
The IntelCities Community of Practice:
The eGov Services Model for Socially Inclusive and Participatory Urban Regeneration Programs

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ABSTRACT

The chapter examines the IntelCities Community of Practice (CoP) supporting the development of the organization's e-Learning platform, knowledge management system (KMS) and digital library for eGov services. It begins by outlining the IntelCities CoP and goes on to set out the integrated model of electronically enhanced government (eGov) services developed by the CoP to meet the front-end needs, middleware requirements and back-office commitments of the IntelCities e-Learning platform, KMS and digital library. The chapter goes on to examine the information technology (IT) adopted by the CoP to develop the IntelCities e-Learning platform, KMS and digital library as a set of semantically-interoperable eGov services supporting the crime, safety and security initiatives of socially-inclusive and participatory urban regeneration programs.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of the intelligent city as the provider of electronically-enhanced services has become popular over the past decade or so (Graham and Marvin, 1996; Mitchell, 2000). In response to this growing interest in the notion of intelligent cities, researchers have begun to explore the possibilities of using CoPs as a means of getting beyond current 'state-of-the-art' solutions and use the potential such organizations offer to develop integrated models of e-government (eGov) services (Curwell, et.al, 2005; Lombardi and Curwell, 2005). This chapter shall report on the outcomes of one such

exploration and review the attempt made by a consortium of leading European cities to use the intelligence that CoPs offer as the organizational means by which to get beyond current state-of-the art solutions. The CoP in question is that developed under the IntelCities Project[1] and which is known as the IntelCities CoP. The chapter shall report on the development of the IntelCities CoP under the leadership of Manchester and Siena. It shall explore the value of using CoPs as the organizational means by which to secure the intelligence - humans and artificial - that cities need to develop integrated models of eGov services. Integrated models of eGov services seen as being of particular value for the reason they meet the e-learning needs, knowledge transfer requirements and capacity building commitments of Europe's policy on socially-inclusive and participatory urban regeneration programs.

THE INTELCITIES COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The IntelCities CoP is made up of research institutes, information, communication and technology (ICT) companies and cities, all collaborating with one another and reaching consensus on how to develop integrated models of eGov services. Made up of researchers, computer engineers, informational managers and service providers, the IntelCities CoP has worked to develop an integrated model of eGov services and support the actions taken by cities to host them on platforms (in this instance something known as the eCity platform) with sufficient intelligence to meet the e-learning needs, knowledge transfer requirements and capacity building commitments of socially-inclusive and participatory urban regeneration programs (Deakin and Allwinkle, 2006).

As an exercise in CoP development, the organization is particularly successful for the reason the intelligence it has sought to embed in cities and integrate within their platforms of eGov services,

is inter-organizational, networked, virtual and managed as part of a highly-distributed web-based learning environment. If we quickly review the legacy of CoPs in organizational studies, the value of developing such a learning environment should become clear. For as the literature indicates, CoPs are an emergent property of organizations and the challenges they pose for those seeking to exploit their potential in such learning environments is considerable.

Literature on CoPs

The literature on CoPs reveals many different kinds of situated practices, all of them displaying quite varied processes of learning and knowledge generation, gathered around distinct forms of social interaction. In this respect, Wenger's (1998, 2000) studies of CoPs is of the ways that insurance claim processors and other such occupational groups learn to be effective in their job. Orr (1996) also studies the importance of CoPs amongst photocopier repair technicians. Osterlund (1996) studies are of CoPs as learning organizations that cut across craft, occupational and professional divisions and which transfer knowledge between them. The collective representation of CoPs in the literature suggests such organizations have the characteristics displayed in Table 1.

Taking this representation of CoPs as a starting point for their examination, Amin and Roberts (2008) suggest there are four distinct types of inter-organizational learning and knowledge transfer. These being: craft, professional, creative and virtual.[2] As Amin and Roberts (2008) go on to point out, until recently it has been assumed that virtual organizations cannot be considered as a CoP, promoting learning and transferring knowledge on its own terms. Although, as they go on to stress, as it becomes easier to communicate with 'distant others' in real time and in increasingly rich ways, there is interest in understanding how such learning environments can be used to manage knowledge. The resulting proliferation of online

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