



CASE STUDIES OF ON-LINE PARTICIPATORY PLATFORMS

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Casi di studio di piattaforme partecipative on-line

Tommaso Castellani, Davide D’Orazio, Adriana Valente
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In questo rapporto presentiamo i risultati di un lavoro di mappatura realizzato all’interno del progetto europeo SciCafe 2.0. Abbiamo raccolto 13 esempi di piattaforme di partecipazione on-line, descrivendole e commentandole.

Parole chiave: metodologie partecipative, democrazia on-line, public engagement

Case studies of on-line participatory platforms

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In this working paper, we present the results of a mapping work realised within the SciCafe 2.0 European project. We collected 13 instances of on-line participatory platforms, describing and assessing them.

Keywords: participatory methodologies, on-line democracy, public engagement

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1. Introduction

This working paper presents the results of a mapping work realised within the European Project “SciCafe 2.0”, funded by the European Union, Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 611299.

Within the SciCafe 2.0 Work Package 4, we collected 13 instances of on-line participatory platforms. We described and assessed the platform, after having classified them according to the following elements.

For each case study we defined a *type* and a *function* (which includes a *subfunction*), according to the following tables *elaborated* starting from a proposal by Sanders et al. (2010):

Type

tool	a component used in online participatory activities
toolkit	a collection of tools that are used in online participatory methodologies
technique/application	tool/toolkits put into action (implemented tool/toolkit)
method	combination of tools, toolkits, techniques put together to address defined goals

Function

Telling	receive information provide information
Enacting	discuss deliberate propose vote
Making	share projects co-design projects collective problem solving share goods

The distinction among the different types is not always straightforward, since several cases are in the boundaries between these definitions. The assignation of a type to each case study has been done considering the most relevant aspects for the analysis.

In the function “Telling” the sub-functions “receive information” and “provide information” are referred to the platform. “Receive information” means that the platform is aimed to gather information by the users, while “provide information” means that the users can gather information from the platform.

Regarding the “Enacting” function, the difference between “discuss” and “deliberate” is that in the second case the discussion is aimed to take a decision. The “propose” sub-function implies the possibility of making proposals independently on the possibility of discussing them. The “vote” sub-function implies the possibility of voting in whatever form.

In the function “Making”, the sub-functions “share projects” entails the possibility of sharing projects which have already been designed, while the possibility of co-design projects

within the platform is included in the sub-function “co-design projects”. “Collective problem solving” refers to those citizens’ science platforms in which users can contribute to find solutions to scientific problems.

For each case study, we also wrote a *purpose* and a *context of application*.

Paradigm

To each case study a paradigm has been assigned, according to the following categories:

- INIP – Interaction Information Provider
- AST – Ask-Tell
- CODI – Collective Discussion
- DIREP – Discussing for Reaching Power Nodes
- REP – Reaching Power Nodes
- COST – Consulting Stakeholders
- SHAGO – Sharing Goods
- MAP – Mapping
- CODE – Co-design
- COPS – Collective Problem-Solving

The detailed description of the paradigms is contained in the Handbook of On-line Participatory Methodologies that will be published in autumn 2014.

2. The case studies

2.1. OECD Better Life Index

Type	technique
Function	telling
<i>Sub-function</i>	provide information
Purpose	raising awareness
Context of application	debate on measuring the well-being of societies in OECD countries
Website	http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/

Description

The OECD Better Index is part of the debate on the measuring of well-being. Since it was founded, in 1961, the OECD has helped governments design *better policies for better lives* for their citizens. This index aims to involve citizens in this debate, and to empower them to become more informed and engaged in the policy-making process.

Better Life Index is projected and designed by OECD to visualise and compare some of the key factors – like education, housing, environment, and so on – that contribute to well-being in OECD countries. It is an interactive tool that allows to see and compare how OECD countries perform according to the importance the users give to each of 11 topics that make the *better life index*. The 11 topics reflect what the OECD has identified as essential to well-being in terms of material living conditions (housing, income, jobs) and quality of life

(community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance).

Each topic is built on one to four specific indicators: for example, the Jobs topic is based on four separate measures: the employment rate, personal earnings, the long-term unemployment rate and job security. The most important and innovative feature of OECD better life index is that the users can edit the elements of the index, for example changing the importance of topics (the weights of index in technical word) to build their personal better life index. Then user can compare his personal index with those of others and share it with his friends or embed it in his own website and encourage others to compare their Index with it. A blog is linked with the OECD Better Index where are posted articles concerning well-being measurement issues.

Assessment

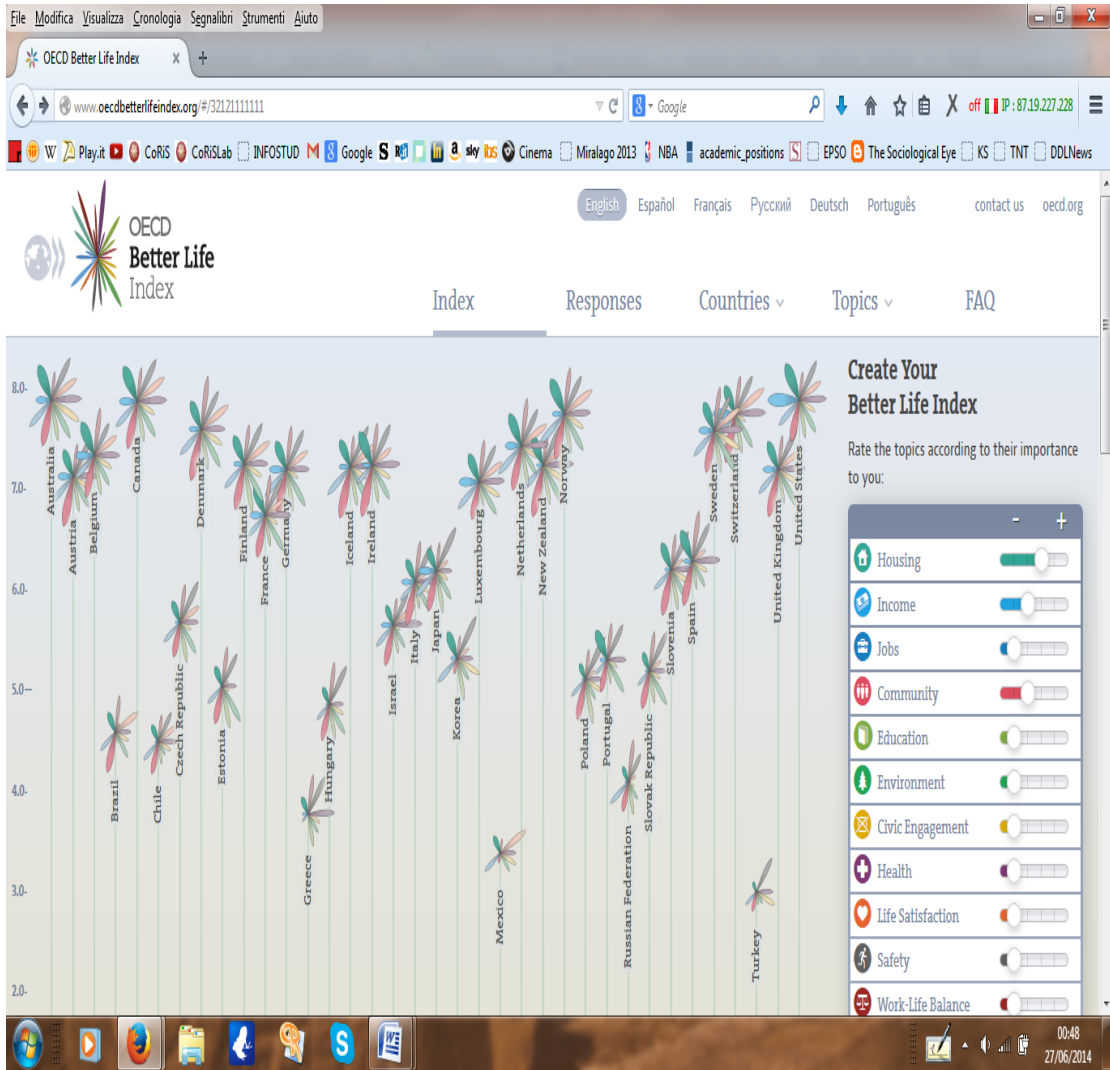
This platform fully embodies the INIP paradigm, in fact, there is a central entity where the information is contained and users can not modify the information which is present but only modify the way in which it is elaborated and displayed. The participatory level is very low because users can only manage the data, but their works and their ideas are not collected to design or implement a different kind of better life index.

The quality and the amount of data is impressive and is the strength of the platform, on the other hand the lack of a real participatory dimension restricts the power of engagement of citizens. The INIP paradigm seems to be an interactive evolution of the info-graphic. Furthermore the topic of well-being measurement and the index building issue are not very simple to understand, in particular the second are too complex for whom are not familiar with the field and this fact undermines a real raising of awareness of users.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of data • Friendly user interface
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic is not familiar (index building) • To implement the participatory level

Similar and related platforms

www.misuredelbenessere.it is a very similar site at OECD Better Index, in fact is quite the Italian version of it with some important differences. Indeed www.misuredelbenessere.it has a space where users can discuss the index areas. Then there has been a survey for the users which had helped the index building. Furthermore meetings and focus group with citizens were organized to discuss the index construction. Here it seems to be more present a powerful participatory dimension.



2.2. Debate Graph

Type	tool
Function	enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	discuss, deliberate
Purpose	raising awareness, policy making and others
Context of application	various
Website	http://debategraph.org

Description

DebateGraph is a cloud-based tool to create conceptual maps on any kind of topics and arguments. The purpose is to create a new kind of public service that enables local and global communities of people to think together.

DebateGraph was co-founded by Peter Baldwin and David Price, the first was a politician who has also held important political offices like Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services in Australia. After leaving politics, Peter became interested in argument mapping as a means for raising the quality of debate about public policy issues, and

in particular the potential for the web to enable dispersed collaboration on the creation of large-scale argument maps of complex and contentious issues. Instead David Price was a consultant and public policy advisor and has worked with various public and private sector organizations including: the *BBC*, the *European Commission*, *CNN*, *UK Prime Minister's Office*, *HM Treasury*, *Ofcom* and *Virgin TV*.

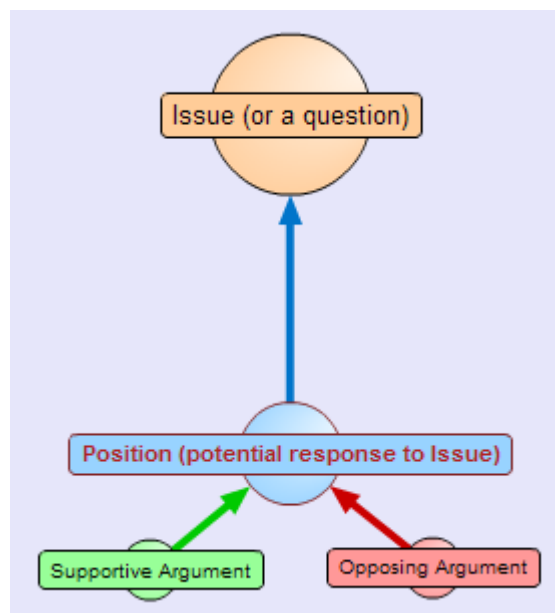
Both of them are very interested in the fields of organization and environmental policy.

In fact, *DebateGraph* is the synthesis of this interest: a tool to organize a new kind of participatory discussion, mainly a new way to visualize the discussion, share and link new knowledge.

Assessment

The goal of *DebateGraph* is to empower public discussing by the collaboratively building and editing of conceptual maps of debates. Moreover, each public map contributes to, and forms part of an accumulating graph of structured understanding across a growing range of topics. Thus, for example, separate maps developed in different field can create a cross-links with maps of the other field to generate a whole knowledge from different domains. The essence of *DebateGraph* is thus the building of conceptual maps, which involves three steps:

1. breaking down the subject into meaningful ideas;
2. figuring out the relationships between those ideas;
3. expressing the ideas and relationships visually.



The maps can be public or private, that is, public if everyone can edit the map, private if only authorized users as friends or work group can edit it.

DebateGraph is an evolution of CODI paradigm; in fact, the platform implements the sharing of ideas, but more it implements the visualization of the conceptual discussion. Users can contribute in different ways: they may just explore the map, they may make queries, they may contribute to the discussion, and they may add nodes or connect different maps of different domain. All aspects of the debate maps – both their content and structure – are

continuously open to revision, refinement, comment, and evaluation by anyone who wants to join the community of thought. Each map is a cumulative work in progress that can be edited and expanded just like a wiki. In fact debate graph is not only a platform for public discussion, but is very similar to Wikipedia.

The participatory dimension of *DebateGraph* is very strong but sometime the topic of maps are too specialized, it seems that the arguments are for experts only and this may result into a barrier to improve and implement a really collaborative and open discussion.

The users before using the platform have to register themselves on the website.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping helps the discussion • Everyone can edit map in easy way
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics are often too specialized

Similar and related platforms

Vilfredo goes to Athens is a platform where everybody can open a new discussion simply submitting a question to the community which populates the site. The platform goal is to reach a shared proposal and a share answer after a public discussion where users can vote the better answer of other users to reach the most agreed solution. The users have to login in to access to the platform, but they can use, also, their Facebook account.

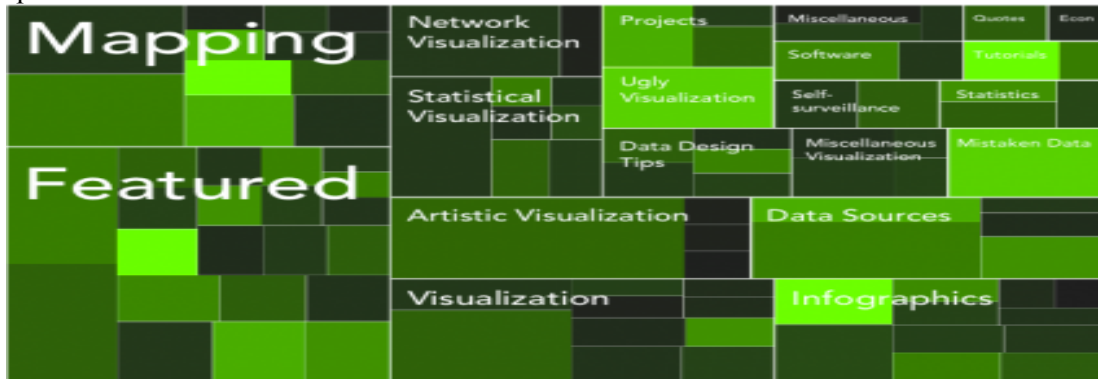
2.3. *Assembl*

Type	tool
Function	enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	discuss, deliberate, propose, vote
Purpose	raising awareness, policy making and others
Context of application	various
Website	http://assembl.org

Assembl is a web application that enables users to work together with the goal of creating a single, tangible product. Assembl allows large number of users to discuss and debate in a manner that elevates the intelligence of the group. Assembl is being developed by Imagination for People (I4P), an organization seeking to help social entrepreneurship. The platform is now involved in the CAPS EU project CATALYST. Assembl is free to use if the final product will be open to all, if the final product is for internal distribution or is for monetary gain, however, a fee will apply. The goal of Assembl is to improve and to implement the Collective Intelligence for improving society, business and government practices. In terms of society it aims to increase citizens' participation and to engage communities. On the other hand, for business, Assemble can increase innovation and employee participation. In fact, Assembl in its web-site advices four main domain of application: Business, Education, Government and, Groups and Events.

Assessment

Assembl is designed to facilitate the co-creation of new ideas: the application allows to large groups of people to all submit and build on each others' ideas. The Assembl methodology allows the users to organize the ideas of a group in order to let participants react to each other's ideas. Assembl allows also mapping the group ideas and creating a graph of group network.



Assembl uses three principles to coordinate the group discussion and co-builds ideas:

- The size of the group matters and each member has a role
- Post factum choice. When many people and ideas are involved the situation is not predictable. In this scenario it is better to gather as many ideas as possible and choose a strategy to sift through and select the most pertinent later.
- Mapping for an overview. Creating a table of ideas and a mind map both offer a way for participants to organize their thoughts and to see possible progressions of ideas.

This principles are fundamental to implement the Assembl methodology which is based on the main user role:

1. The Orchestrators – the people who help formulate the problem, determine the type of document that will be created, set up the pace and decide the constitution of the workgroup (open, semi-open, closed; small, medium, large; with or without deadlines, etc.)
2. The Harvesters – individuals who extract the key ideas from each thread that will represent the core structuring elements of the debate
3. The Wrappers – individuals who create summaries of the key ideas and submit the syntheses to the group for “rough consensus” or line-by-line voting.

Assembl is the essence of CODI paradigm, moreover is a tool which can, also, implement the CODE paradigm, if Assembl is used in the business field to create new ‘real’ products.

The participatory dimension of *Assembl* is very strong but sometime it seems to be too structured to allow a real open discussion. Indeed, the organization underline the features to improve social changes, but the platform seems to fit better in the business field.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New way to conduct group discussion and co-build ideas and project • the high number of application field
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the platform full potential may require a very large group

The platform has also a blog where users can share their experience with the software, and the organization posts articles about “collective intelligence” and its applications.

2.4. *What do They Know*

Type	technique
Function	tell
<i>Sub-function</i>	receive information, provide information
Purpose	institutional communication, everyday information
Context of application	information exchange
Website	https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/

Description

WhatDoTheyKnow is a platform where UK citizens can make a request to a public authority or authorities linked to the platform. The platform itself undertakes to be the mediator between the citizens and the authority. WhatDoTheyKnow covers requests to 15509 authorities like Ministry of Defence, Royal Mail, Department of Work and Pensions, etc.

WhatdoTheyKnow is a project by mySociety, this is an e-democracy project of UK Citizens Online Democracy, that aims to build ‘socially focused tools with offline impacts’. mySociety has developed many e-democracy projects the most important are:

0. Alaveteli, international right to know software e-petitions
1. FixMyStreet, a map based application that helps people inform their local authority of problems needing their attention, such as broken streetlamps etc.
2. FixMyTransport, a site for contacting any transport operator in Britain about problems with public transport.
3. HearFromYourMP, a site encouraging MPs to email their constituents.
4. MapIt, maps postcodes and points to current or past administrative area information and polygons for all the United Kingdom.
5. PledgeBank, runs pledges on all topics, of the form: ‘I will do x if y people agree to do the same.’
6. TheyWorkForYou, tracks speeches and activities of Members of Parliament, including presenting an accessible version of Hansard
7. WriteToThem, provides contact details for elected representatives at all levels of UK government, and users can send messages to them directly from the site (formerly FaxYourMP).

mySociety is UK based, but actively supports individuals and organizations around the globe to run their own sites based on mySociety tools. mySociety develops free and open source software and everyone can ask for them and it so provides assistance to develop and adapt its platforms. There is also a blog linked to the website but it seems not to be very up to date (probably it is not very much used).

Assessment

WhatDoTheyKnow is a powerful platform to reach the authorities to which the user wants to make a request. It is very open, everyone can make a request, but if the users want they can register to mysociety platform to use also the other company software. Moreover the users can see the other users' requests, so they can find out if their request has already been made; the user can, also, search all the requests that have been made. After the users has done their request they can follow the *iter* through the platform and at the end the answer will be posted on the homepage of the site. One of the most important pages of the site is the page of authorities where the user can find every public authorities who are part of the project. On the left side they can look at them divided by categories: central government, local region, education and so on. WhatDoTheyKnow is the essence of REP paradigm, in fact it allows to contact directly the authorities, but in it the users can not discuss with other users, they can only make their request or see the requests of others without speaking with them

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very simple and powerful • high number of application fields
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not include group discussion

2.5. LandShare

Type	technique
Function	making
<i>Sub-function</i>	share goods
Purpose	sharing goods
Context of application	Land sharing
Website	http://www.landshare.net

Description

LandShare is a platform for the sharing of the lands focused primarily on vegetable gardens. It is already available in UK, Australia and Canada and will be developed also in Italy.

The idea for Landshare was born out of Channel 4's River Cottage series, when Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall helped some Bristol families grow food on disused council land. Since then more than 2,000 acres of land have been offered by those willing to share their land with people who want to grow.

It provides informations about buying, selling, renting or common farming of land. Moreover, it provides a forum where to ask questions and give information about these activities with an active community.

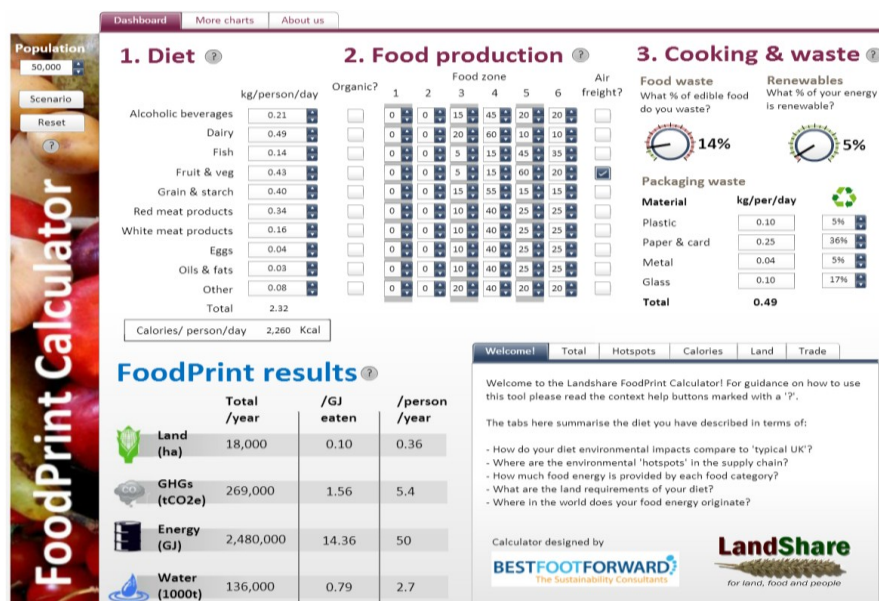
Assessment

In Landshare the users can sign up themselves as growers, landowners (you can offer your land in return for produce), land-spotters (if you have got your eye on a fertile patch) or

facilitators (to support elderly or other landsharers who need a bit of help). If you are in a group you can share info on events and keep in touch with other members.

LandShare is a Social Enterprise focused on three projects: How to feed a city, Energy Positive and Land Partnership.

How to feed a city is a project for helping people to understand their food supply, and plan how to make it more secure. It is aimed at people who buy food for a family, a school, a restaurant, or a grocery store, or thinking about the food security of a city as a whole. It is based on proportionality, using 'life cycle analysis' data to estimate the relative impact of the different choices made about food on the resource intensity of food supply.



Energy Positive provides the tools to calculate the 'embodied energy' in a farm production system, and to calculate how much energy would be embodied in alternative farm management scenarios. This allows the farmer to plan a strategic way forward, weighing up different farm management options in the light of detailed information on their relative exposure to changes in energy costs.

Land Partnerships are mechanisms which allow landowners and new farm entrepreneurs in the UK to club together to create new land enterprises, with the aim of building up a cluster of complementary enterprises. This platform is an evolution of SHAGO paradigm, in fact, not only it wants to implement the sharing of goods, in this case the sharing of land, but it wants to create a new kind of food production which would be eco-sustainable. Now however, in the new version of web-site, more of the features which we speak about are not visible, were only the information about projects and some texts about them, any participatory dimensions are disappear and the link to old version of web-site is offline.

- Step 1: Taking stock**
Making a clear assessment of the assets you have at your disposal, and what you would like to achieve with them.
- Step 2: Finding the right match**
Getting the right combination of land, people, skills, and objectives.
- Step 3: Creating a balanced agreement**
Working out how to share the risks and rewards of new land enterprises.
- Step 4: Selecting a legal framework**
Most of the required legal and business structures exist already. This is about using tried and tested tools to create novel outcomes.
- Step 5: Thinking long-term**
Being prepared for the inevitability of change: creating options, optimising resources, and building business relationships that will stand the test of time.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and wide scope
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new version of web-site has partly lost its participatory dimension

Similar and related platform:

Another platform inherent at the SHAGO paradigm is BookCrossing, where the shared goods are the books. BookCrossing is a social networking site where the users can label their books and then they can share them and follow their trip around the world. BookCrossing online archival and tracking system allows members to connect with other readers, journal and review literature and trade and follow their books as lives are changed through ‘reading and releasing’. Users are able to tag and track their individual books by marking them with BCIDs (BookCrossing Identity Numbers).

2.6. Placespeak

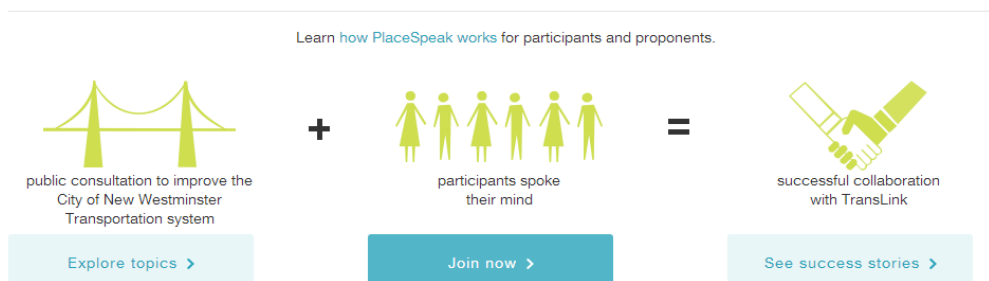
Type	technique
Function	telling, enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	provide information, discuss, propose
Purpose	institutional communication, petition making
Context of application	location-based community consultation platform
Website	https://www.placespeak.com

Description

PlaceSpeak is a location-based community consultation platform. Its mission is to empower people everywhere to provide their verifiable feedback on public consultations by combining the values of a non-profit with the flexibility and innovation of a tech start-up. PlaceSpeak is developed by PlaceSpeak Inc. It is a free public participation platform funded by charging proponents of consultations a license fee. It does not sell advertising nor its participants’ personal information. It charges community groups and non-profit organization 1/10th of the cost of the standard subscription, while citizen participants engage for free.



PlaceSpeak is a location-based community consultation platform.
Claim your place. Speak your mind. Influence the outcome.



This platform activates local communities about a topic and is divided in two parts: the user, like a public institution or a no-profit organization or a private company that needs a feedback about a project (the “proponent”), and the citizens who log in the platform and are consulted if the project involves the community to which they belongs (the “participant”).

Being an intermediary service, PlaceSpeak is with fee for those who wish to submit a project. The platform provides a place where those within the community can discuss online and have a confrontation with the creator of the project, in order to reach participatory and collective decisions.

The participant can sign up in the site, discover the topics of interest and contribute by the tool chose by the proponents. The proponents can register their organization, map the affected area and determine who can participate geographically, choose the consultation tools they want to use to receive feedback from participants. They can also engage with their participants a report on the outcome of the consultation.

Assessment

PlaceSpeak requires users to create profiles with verified geographic information to ensure that they only partake in consultation opportunities relevant to them. When signing up, users have the option to receive a notification every time a new opportunity is created in their area. On the Explore Topics tab, a Google Map shows currently available consultation projects, which can be filtered by their color-coded by their topic area. The page also has featured topics, popular topics near the users location, recently added topics and a sidebar allowing users to browse by suggested topics, categories, organizations and popular tags.

PlaceSpeak is an excellent example of COST paradigm, in fact here a whole community would be contacted to become part of decision process. The level of participatory dimension is very high and users can be very active on the platform and they really can influence the decision process.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> powerful platform
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not useful if there are not topics or projects near the user

Similar and related platforms

OurSpace is an open source, easy-to-use tool designed to support anyone who needs to consult with large groups of young people, regardless of nationality or language boundaries.

It is a tool that uses social networking and Web 2.0 features to encourage young people and members of the European and National Parliaments to share ideas and engage in debates about issues that affect their everyday life.

2.7. MindMixer

Type	tool
Function	enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	discuss, deliberate, propose, vote
Purpose	raising awareness, policy making
Context of application	e-democracy, virtual discussion citizens/policy makers
Website	https://www.mindmixer.com

Description

MindMixer is a ‘virtual town hall,’ providing a forum for communities to share ideas, discuss, and create plans for the future. Without the time and place constraints, citizens can share ideas online, and leaders can gain input from their communities.

MindMixer gives citizens a space to share ideas, and community leaders a resource to gain ideas and input. First, MindMixer helps to identify the main focus areas by talking to civic leaders about the most common issues brought up in the community. A custom site is then created for the community, allowing leaders to add information about the issues and citizens to learn more, ask questions, and submit ideas. This forum is open anyone for tackling the pressing topics identified in the community. Citizens can vote on which ideas they think are the most viable for the particular topic, with a rating system completely based on merit. Voters may also give feedback and make comments or suggestions on the submissions. MindMixer then provides ideas, and encourages discussion, on how to implement the ideas generated through the voting process.

MindMixer provides the tools for communities to get the most out of their online collaboration forum:

- site hosting
- site administration and customer service
- user and client email and texting notifications
- project reporting
- reward systems to successful ideas

To encourage creative, resourceful solutions to community issues, MindMixer gives rewards to the most highly rated submissions. Also to encourage ongoing momentum within communities, MindMixer tracks the most involved citizens and reaches out to these individuals for future planning projects. This tool allows the users to express their ideas and let their voice be heard. Furthermore, the instances are presented to the stakeholders and Citizens can verify the implementation of project.

Assessment

MindMixer perfectly embodies the CODI paradigm, for its features which encourage and implement the public discussion, but for its many properties this platform is also part of COST paradigm, in fact MindMixer is able to enact a whole community. The participatory dimension is very strong, though the fact that the most active users have a reward may rise problems.

In MindMixer participants can use existing Facebook, LinkedIn, or Google accounts or their email address to sign up, furthermore they have a blog where can post their experiences using MindMixer and where the most relevant direct democracy and e-democracy examples are shown.



Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MindMixer allows to participate citizens who may otherwise be discouraged by time or location constraints. • Anyone can submit ideas, regardless of past participation history or social status. • The simple voting system democratizes the collaboration process and the most salient ideas rise naturally to the top. • MindMixer encourages transparency, putting all ideas out into the open and allowing widespread feedback.
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As any web-based engagement platform, participation may be limited by certain demographics. • It is not cheap. A subscription (including moderation and support) can cost thousands of dollars per year.

Similar and related platforms

LiquidFeedback helps groups (such as societies or organizations, political or not) to make decisions, without the limitations of a traditional internet forum. It aims to create an accurate representation of the opinions held by the members of the group without them being distorted by social hierarchies and knowledge disparities. Each individual is encouraged to further their own initiatives within the limitations set by the operators.

The proxy voting feature creates power structures similar to representative democracy, even though delegations can be withdrawn at any time. This is necessary to produce results that reflect the mood of the majority, even when they don't find the time to participate in person, in order to avoid the domination of the extroverts, which is the problem that regularly arises with grassroots democracy.

2.8. Who Owns My Neighbourhood?

Type	technique
Function	tell
<i>Sub-function</i>	provide information
Purpose	institutional communication
Context of application	get info on use of public land
Website	http://whoownsmyneighbourhood.org.uk

Description

This is a platform where users can ask to whom a building or a land in your neighbourhood belongs. Who Owns My Neighbourhood? is a website by Kirklees Council's land ownership information, which they have made available online for the first time as part of the project.

This platform is part of NESTA (formerly NESTA, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) which is an independent charity that works to increase the innovation capacity of the UK. The organization acts through a combination of practical programmes, investment, policy and research, and the formation of partnerships to promote innovation across a broad range of sectors.

The platform not only gives the user the information about land or buildings, but it makes them get in touch with neighbours or people interested in the same building, so enabling the user to create a community through which they can possibly build joint projects. It is not just an ask-tell platform, but it is much more than an attempt to reconstruct the social network of the neighbourhood to repossess their neighbourhood.

Who Owns My Neighbourhood? aims to give users a starting point for getting things done in their own neighbourhoods. This platform would make easier for users to have conversations about their local area and to answer each other's questions by sharing knowledge.

If users have an interest in a particular plot of land, they can sign up to become a 'community contact' and keep in touch with other people who care about the same area. They

can also share their latest news about local places, or share local history and local places names.

Assessment

Who Owns My Neighbourhood? is a larger example of AST paradigm, in fact its goal is not only to answer a specific question, also because in this platform the field is about the ownership of lands and buildings, but the platform has a broader view, it attempts to regenerate the social network of the neighbourhood, so it may be associated with CODI and SHAGO paradigms, and in a broader way also at the CODE paradigm if the purpose of the users becomes to share projects on a particular land. The users to become part of this platform have to register themselves by their e-mail address. Who Owns My Neighbourhood? also has a blog which actually is not very active and where there are news about the project.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very simple
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not allowed group discussion • It is limited to Kirklees city

Similar and related platforms

Localmind is a phone app that gives you the ability to know what is happening anywhere in the world in that moment. Localmind gives the users the ability to send any question you want to someone that is at a location you are interested in. That person (who is either a Localmind user or one of your Foursquare friends) receives the question to their phone and responds, in real-time. When the users check-in with their favorite check-in service (such as Foursquare, Gowalla, or Facebook Places) you become available to be sent a question about that location. If a fellow user has a question about that location, you receive a notification and can respond in real-time.

2.9. Ushaidi

Type	tool
Function	tell
<i>Sub-function</i>	provide information, receive information
Purpose	raising awareness, data collecting
Context of application	open information
Website	http://www.ushahidi.com/

Description

Ushahidi is a non-profit software company that develops free and open-source software (LGPL) for information collection, visualization, and interactive mapping. The organization uses the concept of crowd-sourcing for social activism and public accountability, serving as an initial model for what has been coined as ‘activist mapping’—the combination of social activism, citizen journalism and geospatial information. Ushahidi (Swahili for ‘testimony’ or ‘witness’) created a website (<http://legacy.ushahidi.com>) in the aftermath of Kenya’s disputed

2007 presidential election (see 2007–2008 Kenyan crisis) that collected eyewitness reports of violence reported by email and text message and placed them on a Google Maps map. The Kenyan site was developed and run by several bloggers and software developers, all current or former residents of Kenya. They include Erik Hersman, Juliana Rotich, Ory Okolloh, and David Kobia. The site was initially proposed by Okolloh, developed cheaply, and put online within a few days. International media, government sources, NGOs, and Kenyan journalists and bloggers were used to verify eyewitness testimony. The site was later also used to facilitate donations from abroad. The data collected by Ushahidi was superior to that reported by the mainstream media in Kenya at the time. The service was also better at reporting non-fatal violence as well as information coming in from rural areas.

After Kenya crisis, the Ushahidi software was used to create a similar site to track anti-immigrant violence in South Africa, in May 2008 and its use spreads around the world for example in Haiti after the earthquake, in India, Chile, Italy and many other.

Assessment

Ushahidi offers products that enable local observers to submit reports using their mobile phones or the internet, while simultaneously creating a temporal and geospatial archive of events. The goal is to make it more democratic spreading of information. The display on the map is actually the real feature of this platform because it shows the news and information that users send to the software, clearly emphasized. Although it is designed for activists and political movements of various kinds, this software can also be used to create applications for everyday life. The remarkable ability of the platform to gather information from multiple channels, internet, emails, text messages, etc.

This platform is an example of MAP paradigm, in fact the core feature is to map the information.

Ushahidi has also a blog where are posted news about the projects and new software by company.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very simple and powerful • the wide data collection
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is not a large participatory dimension

Similar and related platforms

Crowdmap is a very similar platform to Ushahidi, in fact in this platform the users can create a map about everything, about a theme a place or any else, and can mapping photos, posts, comments and more.

2.10. Thingiverse

Type	technique
Function	making
<i>Sub-function</i>	share projects, co-design projects
Purpose	participatory design
Context of application	repository for 3D-printable objects
Website	http://www.thingiverse.com/

Description

Thingiverse is a website dedicated to the sharing of user-created digital design files. Providing primarily open source hardware designs licensed under the GNU General Public License or Creative Commons licenses, users choose the type of user license they wish to attach to the designs they share. 3D printers, laser cutters, milling machines and many other technologies can be used to physically create the files shared by the users on Thingiverse.

Thingiverse is widely used in the DIY technology and Maker communities. Numerous technical projects use Thingiverse as a repository for shared innovation and dissemination of source materials to the public. Many of the objects are for the purpose of repair.

Thingiverse was started in November 2008 by Zach Smith as a companion site to MakerBot Industries, a DIY 3D printer kit making company and received an Honorable Mention in the Digital Communities category of the 2010 ARS Electronica .

Assessment

This site is a good example of CODE paradigm, in fact in it one can download thousands of projects and the user can also modify and correct the old ones. The users have to register themselves to join to the community, but the platform is totally free. The platform is very active , there are hundreds of thousand projects that users can use or modify.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• useful and simple• wide project collections• totally free
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3D printers are not yet widely used

Similar and related platforms

GitHub is repository web-based hosting service which is a distributed revision control and source code management (SCM) system with an emphasis on speed, data integrity, and support for distributed, non-linear workflows. Github provides a web-based graphical interface and desktop as well as mobile integration. It also provides access control and several collaboration features such as wikis, task management, and bug tracking and feature requests for every project. GitHub offers both paid plans for private repositories, and free accounts for open source projects. As of 2014, Github reports to having over 3.4 million users, making it the largest code host in the world. Github has become such a staple amongst the open-source

development community that many developers have begun considering it a replacement for a conventional resume and some employers require applications to provide a link to and have an active contributing Github account in order to qualify for a potential job.

2.11. Galaxy Zoo

Type	method
Function	making
<i>Sub-function</i>	collective problem solving
Purpose	citizens science
Context of application	astronomy, academic and scientific research
Website	http://www.galaxyzoo.org/

Description

Galaxy Zoo is an international astronomical project where members are asked to classify millions of galaxies. It is an example of citizen science, where participants contribute on a voluntary basis, to a scientific research project.

The original project was launched July 12, 2007 (Galaxy Zoo 1) and February 17, 2009 has been kicked off the continuation of the project (Galaxy Zoo 2). In April 2010 began a new phase of the project called Galaxy Zoo: Hubble, which uses data from the Hubble Space Telescope. Galaxy Zoo is part of the group of projects Zooniverse citizen science.

The project, as mentioned, was born in 2007 inspired by the Stardust @ home, and is a collaboration between the University of Oxford, Portsmouth, Yale, John Hopkins and Fingerprint Digital Media of Belfast.

The goal of this project it to classify the galaxies: in fact, modern computer programs, despite the level of sophistication, are not able to classify the galaxies. The problem is the extremely high amount of the data; so a group of astronomers and cosmologists decided to launch a project on the internet asking for volunteers to view the images extracted from the database of the telescope Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), and classify them according to their morphology. The purpose is to obtain, for each image, at least 20 different classifications by allowing people to have a statistically significant sample. Participation became quickly viral. The team plans to complete the study in two years. Over the first 24 hours, the site received an average of 70,000 per hour classification. The success of Galaxy Zoo inspires many other fields of research. Indeed in 2009, Lintott and his team established a cooperation with other institutions in the UK and USA (the CitizenScience Alliance) to run a number of projects on a common platform “The Zooniverse”. Zooniverse hosts dozens of projects which allow volunteers to participate in crowd-sourced scientific research, including astronomy, ecology, cell biology, humanities, and climate science. As of June 2014, the Zooniverse community consisted of more than 1.1 million registered volunteers. The volunteers are often collectively referred to as “Zooites”. The data collected from the various projects has led to the publication of more than 50 scientific papers. At the moment on Galaxy Zoo platform is present a new project: Galaxy Zoo Quench, which provides the

opportunity for *Zooites* to take part in the entire scientific process, from classifying galaxies to analyzing results to collaborating with astronomers to writing a scientific article.

Assessment

Galaxy Zoo and its extension Zooniverse are examples of COPS paradigm, as implementations of citizen science. To become a *Zooites*, the users have to create an account they can use for all Zooniverse projects. In this account the users can have an avatar and use their real name or a *nick*. The registration form asks for the real name, and this would be used to thank contributors, for example, in talks or on posters. If users do not want to be mentioned publicly they can leave blank the registration form and use only their nickname.

Galaxy Zoo has an important Official Blog and Forum. In the Forum, created at the same time of Zoo Galaxy 1, members can exchange information, ask for explanations, expose concerns, provide data related to other parallel projects arising from or simply know each other. The Forum includes, in addition to volunteers, the founders of the project, known as *Zookeepers*, and many astronomers making the Forum a vital tool for knowledge, analysis and information.



Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide project collections • totally free
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • topics are often too specialized and only for scholars

Similar and related platforms

The Polymath Project is a collaboration among mathematicians to solve important and difficult mathematical problems by coordinating many mathematicians to communicate with each other on finding the best route to the solution. The project began in January 2009 on Tim Gowers' blog when he posted a problem and asked his readers to post partial ideas and partial progress toward a solution. This experiment resulted in a new answer to a difficult problem, and since then the Polymath Project has grown to describe a particular process of using an online collaboration to solve any math problem.

2.12. Ideascale

Type	technique
Function	enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	discuss, propose, vote
Purpose	petition making, data collecting
Context of application	platform for receiving collective feedback
Website	http://ideascale.com/

Description

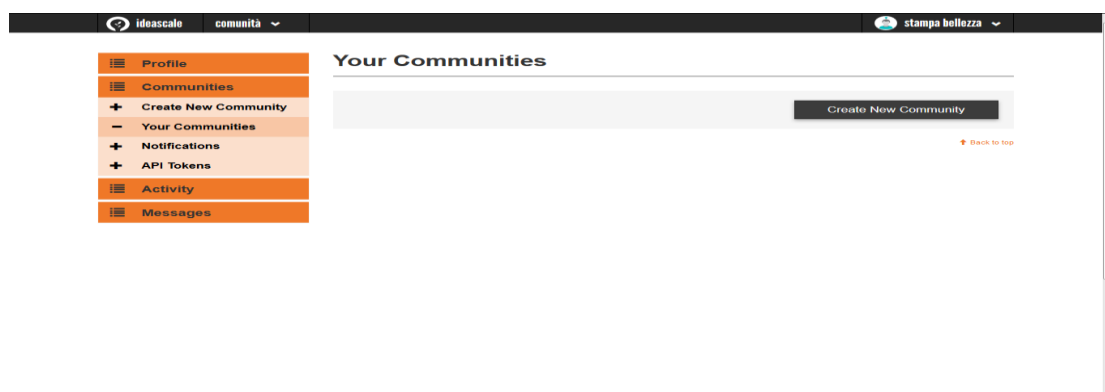
IdeaScale is a platform employing the principles and practices of crowdsourcing for the collection of feedback and ideas. IdealScale was launched in 2008 in tandem with President Barack Obama's Open Government Initiative and in its first year, IdeaScale was adopted by 23 federal agencies. It served many organizations, including the Executive Office of the President of the United States. The following year, the platform's adoption rate expanded to include more than 36 agencies as well as numerous private Enterprise-level companies, now IdeaScale had close to 3 million members and over 13,000 communities.

The idea is quite simple users, would be both public agencies or private enterprises, can use the platform to receive collective feedback.

The platform uses the freemium model, offering a limited number of features and functions for free users and more tolls for paying clients.

Assessment

IdealScale is a perfect example or COST paradigm, in fact users can create a profile on IdeaScale and once they are members of a community, they can submit ideas, comment and vote on other ideas, and the most popular ideas are prioritized at the top based on the number of votes the idea receives. Users can also log in with their personal social network account, as facebook or twitter account.



Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good collection of feedback
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the free version does not implement all features • the full version is very expensive

2.13. YourView

Type	technique
Function	enacting
<i>Sub-function</i>	discuss, propose, vote
Purpose	raising awareness, policy making
Context of application	improve participatory democracy in Australia
Website	https://yourview.org.au

Description

YourView is an Australian not-for-profit debate website, founded in 2012.

Drawing upon the aims and principles of deliberative democracy theory, the website promotes considered debate in order to establish the “collective viewpoint” on political and social issues. YourView is supported by the not-for-profit Ourview Foundation established in 2011 by the Australian philosopher Tim Van Gelder in collaboration with the public intellectual Paul Monk.

YourView draws on ideas developed within the deliberative democracy movement, which promotes rational deliberation as a means of forming opinions and guiding policy decisions.

Users initially vote for or against a proposition based on a current issue, and are subsequently invited to post comments to justify their adopted stance. Each debate is prefaced by an “explainer”, which provides basic information about the issue being discussed including an outline of key arguments.

As part of its objective to promote constructive and informed debate, YourView uses an algorithm to assign each user a credibility score; the algorithm aims to quantify a series of “epistemic virtues” that collectively determine the extent to which an individual user has contributed to the deliberative process. Details about which factors influence the algorithm are not published, which reduces the model’s transparency but aims to prevent users from gaming the system.

Assessment

YourView is a good example of DIREP paradigm, but it also has any features of CODI paradigm, in fact the most relevant accent is posed on the discussion of issue. The goal of this platform is to communicate the “collective wisdom” to decision makers and this fact legitimate the platform to be part of DIREP paradigm. Users to participate at the platform have to sign in but they can also log in with their personal social network account, as Facebook or Twitter account.

YourView has also a blog where the basis of deliberative democracy theory are explained and many other information about project are posted.

For nuclear in the mix

Best way to help avert climate catastrophe
70% support 30% oppose (21 votes)

To help avert climate change, Australia must rapidly decarbonize its own energy supply. Including nuclear in the energy mix is the best way to generate the very large quantities of low-carbon electricity needed to make a significant dent in CO2 emissions. Realistically, it is the only clean source of energy which can compete with coal. Including nuclear also makes the mix more diverse and hence more reliable. Finally, adopting nuclear power in Australia will help strengthen nuclear power internationally as a critical part of any solution to the global challenge of providing sufficient quantities of low-carbon power.

Builds prosperity
55% support 45% oppose (13 votes)

Nuclear power could make vast quantities of reliable electricity available for energy-intensive industries such as aluminium production, boosting the economy and reducing unemployment. Many other aspects of the Australian lifestyle are also energy-hungry. Including nuclear power within our future energy mix will help ensure that our way of life will not only be preserved but improved for generations to come.

Better for the environment
75% support 25% oppose (14 votes)

All sources of energy have environmental drawbacks, with fossil fuels by far the worst. Renewables have their own problems: hydropower devastates rivers, wind power scars the landscape, solar takes up large amounts of land. Nuclear power requires very little land and relatively low resource inputs. Using nuclear energy will also reduce our need to use other energy sources, such as biomass, which are environmentally devastating.

Further information

Against nuclear in the mix

Too Dangerous
50% support 50% oppose (14 votes)

Nuclear power risks catastrophe on a scale unlike any other energy source. The nuclear disasters at Chernobyl and Fukushima lead to untold deaths, horrendous health outcomes, and wide spread destruction. Nuclear reactors are prone to malfunctions, including leaks and explosions, poisoning landscapes for centuries. Nuclear power also raises the unwelcome prospect of terrorist attacks and international tensions, as other countries will question why Australia chose to go down the nuclear path.

Too Expensive
40% support 60% oppose (8 votes)

A fundamental problem with nuclear power is that it is too expensive when all costs are properly counted. Most Western countries have turned away from nuclear power partly for this reason. Reports on nuclear options for Australia also highlight the huge government subsidies needed to make nuclear viable. These costs can be avoided by using alternative energy sources that don't carry such a hefty price tag.

Too Slow
50% support 50% oppose (13 votes)

Nuclear power in Australia is a long way from being implemented. Currently, it is illegal, has low public support and Australia has insufficient technical skills to build it. Even countries which don't have these barriers already take an average of 9 years to build a nuclear plant, illustrating that it would take Australia decades to introduce substantial nuclear power to our energy mix. Moreover, if we want to wait for much safer new technologies, the wait is even longer, as these have yet to become available (and may never be). Nuclear power is simply too slow to be an appropriate response to climate change.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy to use
Criticalities and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited to Australia not very transparent about algorithm of credibility score

Similar and related platforms

Airesis is a free software platform, built by a team of Italian developers and contributors, to enable communities and groups to organize themselves in a productive manner according to the principles of direct democracy and participation.

To achieve this goal, the application has been designed as a multifunctional system, which integrates all the tools that can help the development of a community, in particular “social” and deliberative tools.

3. Conclusion

In the following table we summarize the participatory paradigms and the platforms which implement them:

Name of the paradigm	Examples of platforms implementing the paradigm
INIP – Interactive Information Provider	2.1 Oecd Better Life Index
AST – Ask-Tell	2.8 Who Owns My Neighborhood 2.14 PG exchange
CODI – Collective Discussion	2.2 Debate Graph 2.7 MindMixer
DIREP – Discussing for Reaching Power Nodes	2.13 YourView
REP – Reaching Power Nodes	2.4 What Do They Know
COST – Consulting Stakeholders	2.6 PlaceSpeak 2.12 Ideascale
SHAGO – Sharing Goods	2.5 LandShare
MAP – Mapping	2.9 Ushaidi
CODE – Co-Design	2.3 Assembl 2.10 Thingiverse
COPS – Collective Problem-Solving	2.11 Galaxy Zoo

In elaborating a participatory strategy it is important to assess the quality of the participation of your participatory process, which can refer to the following parameters (Valente and Castellani 2014):

- **Selection:** how the participants are selected? are the selection criteria made explicit? has been the representativeness/inclusiveness trade-off carefully considered?
- **Independence:** are the experts involved independent on the sponsor/promoters of the participatory process? who is paying for the participatory process?
- **Influence:** is it clear the actual influence the participatory process will have on the decision making? are some parts of the process used to justify decisions already taken elsewhere?
- **Timeliness:** will the output of the participatory process arrive on time for influencing the decisions? is the amount of work feasible with the available time? (e.g. urgent decisions)
- **Plurality of sources:** is there any reason of bias of the information sources? is the origin of the sources always made explicit?
- **Interaction among participants:** what sort of interaction is envisaged in the participatory process? are there 'stronger' actors among the participants and is there any balancing factor to avoid their dominance?
- **Knowledge building:** is new knowledge expected to emerge from the participatory process? has the risk of 'process loss' (Rowe et al 1991) been considered? (e.g. loss of knowledge due to alignment to majority position)
- **Transparency:** is every aspect of the process clear for the participants?

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