When CoPs and researchers collaborate to invent life long learning practices: PALETTE project stories

Symposium overview

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Abstract

The PALETTE project integrates computer scientists, educational scientists and members of Communities of Practice with the objective to facilitate and enhance individual and collective learning in Communities of Practice (CoPs) by developing integrated technological services as well as online learning and organisational instruments. The objective of this symposium is to highlight and confront the various experiences and viewpoints of the main actors of this participative methodology: computer scientists, educational scientist and CoPs' members. The debate will lead the participants to identify main added values and drawbacks of this methodology and find perspectives to improve it.

Keywords

Community of Practice (CoP), Participatory Design, Learning.

The PALETTE project

The main goal of the PALETTE project is the facilitation and enhancement of both individual and collective learning through Communities of Practice (CoPs) - frequently interacting groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in that domain. Empowered by the appropriate use of networked applications and advanced technologies, CoPs have the potential to become a fundamental ferment for the deployment of learning environments that support professionals, organisations and individuals in the future. Cross-fertilizing pedagogical (P) and technological researches (T), in order to elaborate, implement and, validate new learning environments, enhancing knowledge building and sharing in CoPs, are the main challenging issues addressed by the PALETTE project. To reach this goal, a participatory design approach has been adopted.

While understanding and respecting the ten CoPs participating in the project own choices, objectives and constraints, collaboration with the PALETTE project allow them to analyse their current situation and, to imagine and make effective possible improvements through the experimentation of new activities and tools. It includes: the management and use of documents owned by the CoPs, the creation of social links through a better awareness of the social networks and interactions, the representation and efficient retrieval of the knowledge created and, the availability of effective decision making processes. Scenarios written through the participatory design process represent the original configuration of practices created by each CoPs through the use of services integrated in their environment: what they would learn and change. The usability and reusability of such scenarios is targeted for the benefit of the wider European community.

Participatory Design Methodology

The ANT (Actor Network Theory) (Latour, 1999; Monteiro, 2000), the Participatory Design principles (Ehn, 2003; Triantafyllakos *et al.*, 2007) as well as principles from the instrumental approach (Béguin, 2003; Béguin & Rabardel, 2000) continuously inform the PALETTE design processes. Namely:

- To take into account all the factors of the PDM both the human and non-human ones and to provide them with means to negotiate their interests and collaborate.
- Sharing cultural backgrounds, ideas and needs (both of the developers and the CoPs);
- Ongoing users' and designers' active participation and commitment;
- Ongoing reflection on process with the designers of the methodology;
- Construction of a shared language and vocabulary.
- Organisation of 'design-in-use' constructive activities to allow for the appropriation of artefacts by users;
- Differentiation of tasks (users and designers carry out different actions) but interdependence of roles (they are necessary to each other);
- Production of intermediary objects (or 'boundary' objects) in order to make concrete the points of discussion between users and designers;
- Mutual learning between the users and the designers.

The first phase of the Participatory Design Methodology, the "Design-for-use" is well advanced. It means that specific scenarios have been elaborated in collaboration with the ten CoPs collaborating with the project and that services have been further developed taking into account the requests of the CoPs. All of the deliverable and development produced during this first phase are available on http://palette.ercim.org/. Now the integration between specific services will be technologically realised and experimented to support real activities lived by the allowing them to revise their practices as well as the services and scenarios suggested. The "Design-In-Use" phase has started

Objective of the symposium

The objective of this symposium is to highlight and confront the various experiences and viewpoints of the main actors of this participative methodology:

- *People who design and evaluate the methodology*: Charlier, B., Daele, A, Esnault, L., Henri, F. and Saunders, M. "Participatory design in PALETTE project: building a collective methodological approach".

- *People who improve and develop practices in CoPs through PDM :*Van De Wiele, N,., Rossier, . Charlier,B., Design in use – the case of two CoPs: ePreP and Did@cTIC.

- *People who design and integrate the services according to the methodology* : El Ghali, A. , Giboin, A., Vanoirbeek*, C. ,* Bridging the Gap between Technical and Pedagogical Project-Partners' Perspectives on the Modelling of Communities of Practice.

- Et El Helou, S., Tzagarkis, M., Gillet, D., Karacapilidis, N., Chiu Man Yu, Participatory Design for Awareness Features: Enhancing Interaction in Communities of Practice

The debate will lead participants to identify main added values and drawbacks of this methodological approach and find perspectives to improve it.

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