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THE URBAN COMMONING IN A CIVIC SOCIAL NETWORK: THE CASE STUDY OF FIRSTLIFE

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Abstract: The integration of ICTs in the urban management is increasing at all levels of public administrations in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public services, but their role is still instrumental rather than drive a change toward a more collaborative local governance. On the other hand, there is a raising expectation of the civil society to participate in decision making processes and contribute in defining local policies about sensitive topics. These purposes are often addressed by using or creating community digital tools designed for a specific contextual scope, resulting in a deep fragmentation of information about civic initiatives and social innovation projects and a lack of continuous communication among urban stakeholders even working in the same area. The challenge is to design an ICT solution to refactor the current practices of cooperation between private and public sector and support a real change in the city management processes from the local to the territorial level. In this contribution, we present the development of FirstLife, a map-based civic social network, designed to represent the complex environment of the city through geo-referenced time framed crowdsourced data about urban entities as events, places, groups, initiatives, projects, stories, news, etc. The main goals of the platform are to support the action of multiple stakeholders in alternative processes of co-management of common or shared resources, as for instance public spaces, green areas and buildings hosting collective institutions, to enable the co-production of services based on a reform of local administrative protocols toward the We-government model, and to empower mixed local networks. The development of FirstLife followed a participatory action design research methodology involving several stakeholders among associations, local authorities and institutions, businesses and the University in the city of Turin in the last two years. The participatory process started from the requirement elicitation, and continued with the collection of applicative scenarios based on the context analysis of internal/external relations of groups of stakeholders and the balancing of their goals in a common platform. Then, the co-design of features has been undertaken in the stakeholders' working environments to model the platform functionalities on the real processes and practices defining social acceptable technological solutions, ready to be adopted by institutional and civic organizations. The platform has been tested-in-use in multiple living labs and pilot projects, experimenting a number of use patterns representing the common actions in the city carried out by public or private actors. These activities have been integrated in an iterative development cycle that brought so far at four progressively improved versions of FirstLife, from a map-based tool to share georeferenced information to a common workbench for multiple stakeholders acting in the same area (from the neighbourhood to the city level) where open groups can self-organize initiatives and cooperate with others. The result of this process is a digital space for urban commoning practices, reflecting the organization of society in

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individuals and structured public and private entities, the spatial framework of their actions and the temporal development of city transformations and initiatives.

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