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First Life, a Social Network for Collaboration and Co-production of Services

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Introduction
FirstLife is a civic social network, developed by the research group "Social Computing" of the Department of Computer Science, University of Turin. FirstLife is an urban data platform for Computer Supported Cooperation, focused on the city and the neighborhood scale and on users as citizens with their personal, professional and territorial networks.
First Life offer a geo-referenced representation of crowdsourced data, by using a mapbased
interface where users can add places, events, news and stories about their neighborhoods and the areas in which they live and work, creating and sharing public information. On the platform, users can not only get information passively but they can interact both with the map and other users, being more active and aware of what is around them, discussing on topics of local interest, organizing new initiatives and coordinating local development projects. Users can form open groups linked to a place in order to promote local forms of reciprocity and mutual-aid, take care of common goods or share private places. Thus, First Life can be used to visualize, integrate, share, comment urban data and make them point of collaboration for strengthening social cohesion in the real world. The local social network will make emerge the new social relations of the emerging urban collaboration trend.
FirstLife is designed to support activities, initiatives and local projects of public and private stakeholders acting in the city. For this reason, the platform is not a commercial product like other social networks, but it is a collective project aimed to connect and improve the coordination among the local networks, enhancing citizen engagement and social innovation processes. Indeed, this new web application has been developed following a participatory process involving associations, local authorities, citizens and businesses of the city of Turin and it continues to be improved over time in relation to the new needs and opportunities arising from ongoing collaborations.

First Life at work
There are several projects with different purposes in which First Life is currently involved, but all having in common the searching for a more inclusive, active and shared way of living the city. In this section, we will list the activities we are now carrying on, while in the next section we will present the possible uses more specifically for co-production initiatives. So far, we have collected information about youngster's points of view of the city through two projects called "Campus Luigi Einaudi and the Territory" and "TeenCarTo".
The first one was organized within a seminar where university students were asked to map the surrounding of the campus thinking at important places of their daily life as students. The map legend was defined collaboratively since it is the most evident channel to collect and visualize the information and it has to express their points of view. In only three events, scholars collected 650 points of interest (following POI) about the area around the University Campus on the basis of how they experience

and use urban spaces. The aim of this project was to make more evident the connection between the university Campus and its surrounding as a way for bridging the inside with the outside of the Campus. The presence of a University campus indeed strongly influence the nearby area. Showing what is correlated to the Campus presence, currently only in the way scholar live the neighborhood, is the first step to make people more aware of which nets are shaping the territory around them. One follow- up of this first project is Teen-CarTo. The project is involving high-school students for adding POI answering to specific questions about how they live, imagine and criticize the city. The result will be an interactive map with georeferenced post and comments describing teenagers lifestyles. At the same time the social network functionalities will open up to the opportunity to comment what is added by others students, engaging them in an exchange of opinions about places they live.

First Life has also being used to put in contact the local administration of a neighborhood in Turin, Mirafiori Sud, and the citizens. Crowdmapping Mirafiori Sud is a project started in 2013 which had a first experimentation using Ushahidi, mainly focused on mapping urban barriers in the area, and now it is based on First Life. This project is about reporting problems and potentialities of the neighborhood and directly communicate them to the local council. The platform indeed is connected to a system for managing workflow that will be used by the public officer to handle citizen's reports.

First Life is planned to be also used for: accessing information about commercial activities and services; facilitating the coordination of working groups, supporting local events and the co-production of services, to help disadvantaged people; promoting activities of urban renewal such as street art or environmental sustainability.

How to use First Life

To use First Life the user has to be registered on the platform available at http://firstlife.di.unito.it providing his real name. After the login the user is presented with a dashboard with a summary of information such as: posts and activities concerning groups to which the user belong; posts selected from his/her areas of interest and from POIs he/she registered to; posts from people he/she is connected with. Users can visualize the map, locate themselves, places or events, and select the time interval of interest to get an overview of what is going on in the surroundings. The user can perform queries by selecting the categories of information or by text search with keywords. He/she can open one the POIs and look at the information there. If interested he/she can register to the POI or connect to the author of the POI or to other people who made comments on it. Depending on the POI type (Place or Event), the user can: registering for upcoming events; joining groups, and, if he/she is already a member, the user will be allowed to participate at the organized activities, posting information, etc. With under construction functionalities users will follow POIs to get notification of new posts and comments; or being administrator of POI. Information on the map can be filtered specifying a temporal interval, by posts concerning something of general utility (e.g., searching tags); by groups on specific issues, in relation to some place on the map.

Conclusions

Our general approach is to find a way to reconnect people to the local reality they live in, realizing an online tool to be more active in the real world. Since collaboration is made by not only communication but also by real life practices, citizens and organizations needs are the center of the platform development.