



eSangathan Newsletter N° 2

Last minute [EU Research on eInclusion](#), the reference website from the EU-Commission

All you need to know about the [first call](#) on Challenge 7

Collaborative Working Environments or CWEs was a strategic objective of the FP6 workprogramme 2005-2006. All the information can be found at [EU@Work New Working Environments](#) website. Further useful information is also available at the [AMI@Work](#) online Communities.

Editorial

Collaborative Working Environments or CWE is one of the two major topics of the eSangathan project and this second newsletter aims at making a larger number of people aware of what this exactly means. It is at the same time a particular way of organising work and a technological tool for which several options do exist. We have first asked Miguel Membrado, researcher, practitioner and member of the consortium to present a state of the art in a snapshot and Chitresh Markanda, also member of the consortium to explain how the situation is evolving in India.

CWEs are not yet really part of most of the professional environments. CWE is an organisational topic requiring a real strategic decision at high managerial level. Indeed, in order to be widely and wisely used, employees and/or partners need to understand what they will gain out of it. In most of the situations, they just reject what might look complicated, too much structured, giving the impression that you have to think before doing! The real issue is to know what you want to achieve with such a tool and choosing one that will enable you to evolve while your knowledge is evolving. Some tools look more attractive than others do. However, will they at the end perform what you expect? It is the real question you have to ask yourself, and it is probably why we still need experts in this field.

[Nicole TURBÉ-SUETENS](#)

From Collaboration to Participation

For more than 25 years, asynchronous collaboration tools have been used by thousands of companies all over the world. Technologies have evolved from Lotus Notes to web-based self-service collaborative environments like eRoom or QuickPlace, just to name the most popular ones. And today there are dozens of such products. What is the feedback of such dissemination? Are employees working better in their daily life? Are all employees using collaborative tools at their desktop?

The answer is NO! The most used collaborative tool is still the electronic messaging system. Why? Because e-mail is an unstructured way to send and share information; an immediate and effortless system. When you enable people and teams to work with powerful collaborative tools, you notice that it takes time for them to consider these tools as part of their daily work.

The reason is the length of the adoption curve, because it takes time to change working habits to work in a more structured and disciplined way. If the company is well organized and its processes well defined, documented and managed, the adoption of the collaboration tools will be easier and faster because they will drive and support the processes.

But, this is not the most common case. A majority of corporations and SMEs are not that well organized and a huge number of employees are still working with a lot of informal knowledge. To

force those employees to structure this informal knowledge through a collaborative tool is a difficult challenge.

This problem doesn't exist with synchronous collaborative tools, because they are based on a real-time communication and there is no need to structure anything. But even those tools are not widely spread in corporations. This lack of usage of synchronous tools will be solved with a pragmatic approach by the hierarchy when it will be obvious that security issues can be managed and that productivity is really higher using these tools.

However solving the asynchronous tool adoption problem will be much more difficult, and what follows shows why it is so important to change our way of thinking about collaboration, because this topic could be one of the next most important corporate organisational changes in the coming years.

Do Collaboration Tools Have Improved Corporate Organizations?

An established fact now is that even in most of the companies using collaborative tools the organization has not changed. It should be obvious that introducing such tools in companies should result in major organisational changes. Why? Because those tools allow people to be more interconnected, to capitalize information, to work transversally instead of vertically, to need less hierarchy in their management, in other words to be more efficient, more productive and more creative. But it is not the case. As research shows us, the major issue is that these collaboration tools have



been matching the rules of the existing organizations, not the reverse. In fact, collaborative tools are used as suppliers, facilitators in some cases, but not as disruptive tools changing radically the behaviour of people. They are just enablers. On the opposite, the most unique recent experience is the emergence of the Web 2.0 paradigm with the birth of a generation of new participative tools and the creation of huge social communities and user-generated contents. The blogosphere has grown from nothing in 2001 to more than 70 million of blogs in 2006, doubling each six months up to now. Social networks like mySpace have reached the 100 million users in 3 years, and user-generated content web sites like YouTube reached 100 million videos streamed daily in less than 2 years! It is not possible to stay quiet in front of this phenomenon. Is it a pure consumer change or will it affect also the companies? Why these participative tools have such a great impact and not the collaborative ones?

It seems that the Web 2.0 wave has woken up a "deep human longing for individuals to participate and make their voices heard" (Thomas Friedman, *The world is Flat*, 2006). People want to participate, to be involved, and to take part of. It is the reason why blogs, wikis, and all user-generated content web sites are so successful.

Participation versus Collaboration

What is the real difference between participation and collaboration? Collaborate is "to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort; to work together toward a common end" (Webster); Participate is "to take part" (Webster) or "to join in, to take part, to involve oneself" (Wiktionary); What it means is that participation action doesn't need a "work together" action, only a personal involvement in a global action. It is easier for most people. "Working together" can be done without reflecting upon the nature of work, while participating induces involvement, and it is what people want, to be involved in the decision, to take part of them, even if they are not fully collaborating to achieve the work.

Blogs are the best example of this new participation era. The origin of blog is egocentric: it is the ability for a human being to publish his own thoughts to be read by his family, his friends, and perhaps some other unknown internet users. Thanks to the possibility of commenting and "trackbacking" on the other bloggers' posts, a huge network of links has been created day after day: the most important ones are not the URL links but the human links created between all bloggers thanks to these two trivial mechanisms. Step by step, a collective intelligence has emerged from this pile of blogs, without any real collaboration, just through a self-organization of active participation! Consequence is that world is changing, not thanks to the collaborative technologies, but thanks to the participative ones that have unleashed the human will to be actively involved in his environment.

Consequences for institutions and hierarchies are huge. For institutions, it is the emergence of the "democracy 2.0" concept, a participative democracy, where the citizen will be

involved in the political decisions at a level never reached until now. For hierarchies, it is the end of hierarchical management in companies, because nobody will suffer anymore not to use in their own company the tools that everybody is using so efficiently in their private life. Even if the company's managers don't want to introduce these participative technologies inside their companies, the pressure from their employees will be so strong that no one will hold this wave.

Participation, a Disruptive Change for the Organization

The situation is critical for the organization, because for the first time, the consumer world is ahead in terms of new usages. Participative tools, even collaborative ones are used daily by millions of people in their private life, changing their habits and their way to see the world and interact. The new generations, still in college or universities, have grown up with these tools, which is not the case for their parents who are today the companies' employees.

It is a disruptive change for the companies. Collaboration tools haven't succeeded in changing organizations and mind-sets, because these tools are only facilitating current work and matching current organizations, even if a small percentage of advanced users take profit from these new tools to change their way of working (e-working, e-organizations). If it is impossible for most users to be fully involved in all the company's collaborative processes, participative tools give the technical infrastructure to allow all company's employees to be really involved, each of them at their own level, in the small or big decisions where they can have something to say. Like in the blogosphere, if the company is able to manage this new organization, a collective intelligence will be self-generated, increasing the efficiency, the productivity and the creativity of each individual, team and finally the whole company.

Participative technologies are for everybody: each employee can use them, publish, comment, interact, share, exchange, validate, interrogate, freely, without any constraint, just following the good usage rules and conventions decided by the company. It is the reason why today the most important thing to do for a company is to implement immediately participative technologies, at least blogs and wikis, in all their departments, with all their teams, allowing people to express themselves, to interact through comments, to start building participative interactions and create step by step a participative ecosystem. This way, it is not only an improved information system that the company will earn; it will be a deep involvement of all the company's actors to reach a common goal and to improve their collective results and intelligence, and finally their mutual collaboration.

**Participation is the key;
Collaboration will be the natural consequence.**

[Miguel MEMBRADO-NETCIPIA UK](#)

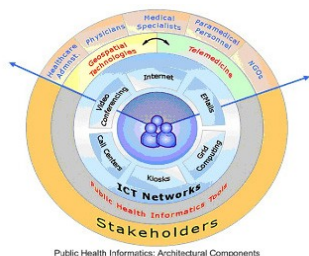
INDIA

India's success in information technology and expansion of Internet and electronic commerce, is redefining relationships in various process of business and governance. Information and communication technologies have been playing an important role not only in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of various organizations. There is a need of new model that would be based upon the transactions in virtual space, digital economy and dealing with knowledge oriented societies.

In 2005 and the first half of 2006, Forrester received nearly 400 client inquiries on collaboration on topics like collaboration strategy, messaging platforms, team collaboration, collaborative document management, Web conferencing, instant messaging and blogs and wikis. According to Forrester, leading collaboration software vendors are unifying their collaboration platforms and evolving them into Information Workplace platforms, which address not only collaboration but also content, portal, office productivity, and other technologies.

Changing Governance models in Indian economy

Reaching the unreached', NIC (Government of India initiative on eGovernance) is focused on greater attention to improve service delivery mechanism, enhancing the efficiency of production, emphasis upon the wider access of information. NIC recently introduced Community Software Solutions (eNRICH), implemented eCommerce solutions to market rural products (RuralBazar etc), emphasis on content in local languages and context. [More Info](#)



GIS Telemedicine: The Synergy

Geospatial technologies used in combination with remote field data collection tools, connectivity to information highways, wireless application and satellite systems hold a new promise for addressing infectious disease threats rapidly and effectively at local and global levels, even in countries with poor infrastructures [More Info](#)

DACNET facilitates Indian 'agriculture online.' DACNET's key criteria included ease-of-use, speed of information delivery, low incidence of errors, reduction in corruption, and affordable services. By 2008, a farmer in any remote village can access information on Land use planning for crop, Real-time information on good-quality seeds or nursery plants, prevailing prices of farm equipment, agricultural produce, and products. [More Info](#)

KissanKerala is one of the collaboration technology based social project in India. KISSAN is an Agriculture Data Centre. KISSAN is developed and maintained by a team of experts from Information Technology, Agriculture, Research Scientists, and Visual Media etc. [More Info](#)

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Sustainable Access in Rural India (SARI) project aims to take new technologies to the poorest and most remote parts of the country. Sari counts on a collaborative and interactive research agenda drawing on the expertise of Harvard's Centre for International Development, IIT-Chennai and the MIT Media lab. For the villages, this would mean an online spot labour market, market prices and other and other agricultural information, e-mail and voice messaging and access to online government forms. [More Info](#)

Other projects like [Baramati Pilot](#), [Toehold Artisans](#), [E-com Hub](#) and [Rural Connectivity](#).

In a recent article in Economic Times, Indian enterprises warm up to enterprise portals. With Gartner pegging the worldwide portal market at \$1 billion Enterprise Portals is big business. Conservative estimates by industry sources put the Indian market at a million dollars, while others believe it to be substantially bigger.

Product Vendors gearing up for India Market:

There are various vendors such as IBM, Microsoft, BEA, Oracle, SAP and Sun Micro Systems who are providing collaborative solutions. [More Info](#)

Corporate India - a rising user of collaboration technology Organizations around the world no matter which industry segment are fast realizing that communication and collaboration are fast becoming essentials to survive in midst of growing competition. Corporations are realizing managing knowledge and the innovation process as the most important new discipline for gaining a competitive edge in satisfying customers.

Mphasis, an Indian IT firm, specializes in the area of application management, legacy systems transformation, enterprise application integration and high-end architecture. With an employee strength of over 1,400 spread across three company sites and a number of onsite locations, obviously faced the challenges of knowledge sharing and collaboration. [More Info](#)

The India center of Cable & Wireless specializes in high-end system integration, network design and management for the enterprise markets. With a virtual team spread across 70 countries worldwide, knowledge sharing and collaboration amongst the onsite and offshore teams is critical for Cable & Wireless operations. [More Info](#)

Godrej Sara Lee (GSL) has major emphasis on research and manufacture of quality household insecticides, and holds a substantial market share in the Indian market. GSL chose MS SharePoint Portal for its Business to Employee (B2E) deployment. [More Info](#)

M&M is currently deploying MS SharePoint across its business sectors under project Sathi for effective knowledge management.

Conclusion

Time is not far when technologies like distributed spatial data portals, geo spatial libraries, corporate KM portals would transform public and private infrastructure, health-care, Agriculture, Commerce into a form of ubiquitous, self

serviced, self-sustaining and progressive knowledge economy. India is poised for growth! [Click here to read more](#) or contact [Chitresh MARKANDA - TECHMAHINDRA India](#).

Future and Emerging Technologies and Paradigms for Collaborative Working Environments

This is the 5th Collaboration@Work Expert Group Report published in July 2006 under the responsibility of EC Officer Isidro LASO-BALLESTEROS from DG Information Society and Media. Here is the preface written by Isidro and the report is available [online](#).

In 30-31 May 2006, New Working Environments Unit of the Directorate General information Society and Media of the European Commission organised the 5th Expert group meeting where recognised experts in the field discussed Future and Emerging Technologies and Paradigms that will affect the R&D agenda in the Collaborative Working Environments (CWE) area in FP7 (2007-2013). The workshop gathered members of the Collaboration@work Experts Group representing academia and research departments within IT industry.

This publication encompasses the findings coming out of the workshop summarising the revised vision of the target CE2020, expected impact, new three Building Blocks, new list of 5 emerging paradigms and updated research challenges brought forward by the experts.

Main conclusions

Target outcome. In 2020 Collaborative Working Environments will be based on collaborative systems including both general collaborative infrastructures and specific applications for supporting **human-centric collaboration**. Collaborative infrastructures will offer seamlessly integrated context-aware flexible support for distributed collaboration among individuals and will draw on service-oriented reference models for massive semantic collaboration. Collaborative infrastructures will provide pro-active support for pervasive human collaboration within their own organisations, with other organisations and with virtual communities of experts and of practice. Collaborative infrastructure will provide system components that comply with the Service Oriented Architectures allowing specific applications for **group-driven composition of systems components to support synchronous and asynchronous teamwork freeing users from routine to focus on creativity with an effective use of distributed knowledge and competences. Converged networks and services, context modelling and reasoning, utility-like ICT, high-level middle-**

ware (upperware) and P2P infrastructures will be part of the collaborative infrastructure needed for Collaborative systems for pervasive collaboration that offers enhanced knowledge sharing mechanisms, better decision making process and less burdensome group processes support in distributed, global networks of collaborators.

Expected impact. Collaborative Working Environments 2020 will create the following impact:

- at organisation level, it will enable a faster time to market, increased business model innovation, better consistency of cross domain processes, and improved flexibility and lead time in global product development;
- at team level, it will lessen misunderstandings, will increase re-use of shared information and knowledge, and will make more efficient task management and allocation through competence networks;
- at individual level, it will boost creativity by reducing routine work, will improve use of idle time through pervasive collaboration services and allow natural human interactions within a group.

Building Blocks. NEW!! To achieve the stated vision of CWE in 2020, several RTD challenges have to be addressed, and the Emerging paradigms have to be considered. From a practical point of view, these RTD challenges can be translated into three 'operative' Building Blocks (BBs) [More info page 22](#)

Emerging paradigms. NEW!! Five contemporary paradigms have been discussed, considering their place and scope and detailing issues and approaches related to each paradigm: [Web 2.0/Serious games/C-pod/C-etiquette/Cooperativity](#).

Research challenges. Updated from previous workshops

The changes to the RTD challenges ([More info page 11](#)) identified in previous meetings were to make collaborative working environments suitable for non-technical users, making sure that people who are not IT specialists can relate to and control the ways in which software and hardware support group collaboration.

On the other end of the IT competence spectrum, we should extend the reach of CWE to the research and advanced technical development community itself, thus bringing the outcomes of using tools and environments closer to the researchers who conceptualise, design, implement and study these tools and environments. In terms of granularity of context, it was considered of value to investigate differences between global and regional context in terms of collaboration support needs and the context of using collaborative tools. The updated list of RTD challenges (which are mapped into the 3

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Useful links:

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@ EU New Working Environments: http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/atwork/index_en.htm
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