Chapter 10
Culture of Services

How do all different types of services affect the reality and routine of the service consumer/user? What cultural effects can we recognize to the community or the individuals? What are the cultural aspects of any newly introduced service? And how these can positively or negatively affect the society at large? In this chapter the author presents results of a research exercise related with the building of services for a collaborative community environment for experiential learning in medical emergencies. Extensive use of the Living Labs methodology has been made and is reported and related with the presented framework. The final part of this chapter is devoted to configuration aspects of the collaborative service environment.

People when dressed the role of consumers are expected to be excited when facing a new offer for a product or a service. And when they find themselves in the shoes of a sales manager or a commercial director, they are excited when fantasising domination of a market through a service or a product of theirs. This is a simple, linear type of thinking: I offer a service and someone is going to pay for it. Un-
fortunately, even a simple transactional act like this of choosing a service is much more complicated.

Marketing people – the ones that we in many occasions wrongly think as service experts – would say: you have to cultivate a need to the people so that you can later harvest their demand for this particular service you offer to them. This is not wrong at all. It only leaves out of the picture the fact that both the cultivation of the need and its consequent harvest do not exist in vacuo but form parts of a culture.

Imagine introducing a service to a society that has been immaculate to it and its connotations – the two most expected things to happen is that either this service will fail or … it may succeed. What we expect from a professional service designer is to find some type of strategy that will lead to a success and leave the failure for the competition. In many cases, we feel that success can be leveraged through improvements of marketing and branding. This is not wrong – however, any new service can be subject to some type of explorative study before its launch.

For many years I have been personally involved in projects dealing with some new facility that improves communication of information across the supply chain of some particular industry. All these projects failed because they were born in the minds of IT professionals and were totally ungrounded on the reality of the actual members of an industrial supply chain. On the other hand, the very same projects might have faced tremendous success if they had addressed a different audience: financial brokers or bankers.

Look in the area of e-tourism and e-travel industry: there is a plethora of service offers and many brands are proud of what they provide to their highly valued customers, but at the end many of them seem to forget the most important part: what the customer really needs and how is the best way to satisfy this need.

In the area of business analytics and data warehousing the term concept drift is used to describe the case of changing patterns for some specific model we have created for a market or a product. Looking back in the world of services, one can speak about service drift for picturing a continuous changing situation related to the positioning of a service within a wider context of suppliers, providers, customers, consumers, mediators and brokers all of them operating in a similar changing market.

Culture, as a term used mainly in the humanities, is a much richer term that carries quite a lot of qualitative elements capable to describe and illustrate several dimensions of a service realisation than any other term from the area of engineering or business. For a culture, the convolution of two or more waves can result in more than one results – while as we all know, engineers understand the convolution as a very explicitly defined operation – like a numerical addition or multiplication.

An area that we all can agree is not governed by rationality is this of corporate mergings: there, it is obvious that what the people face is a clash of cultures; it is an
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