

2_Conceptual Abstracts

COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON CIVIC TECH: THE CASE OF THE ANALOGUE-DIGITAL PLATFORM “ME TO YOU”

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Abstract

The ongoing full-scale war in Ukraine has triggered unprecedented transformations in public administration, accelerating the processes of digitalization and decentralization at the early stages of invasion. Under critical conditions, local communities, volunteer networks, and self-government bodies face a pressing need for innovative tools to manage shared resources and complex humanitarian challenges. Collaborative public governance has emerged as a vital analytical framework, illustrating a shift from traditional state administration to network-based models. Within these models, trust, distributed responsibility, and civic engagement become the cornerstones of effective management.

This paper explores the theoretical grounds and empirical implication of the development of the civic technology “Me to you”, created as a social platform prototype for enhancing capacities of local communities and their self-government bodies. To address the critical structural problem of limited capacities of local governments in crisis settings and at the same time fragmentation of non-organised volunteer movement (which lacks a unified ecosystem and occasionally suffers from trust crises) this study conceptualizes and evaluates a prototype solution

of analogue-digital platform, initiated at Dnipro University of Technology as a response to this problem.

Methodologically, the research employs an action-research approach combined with a case-study. This enabled iterative prototyping and reflexive analysis based on the authors' direct involvement in designing this concept and practical work in the intersection of action research and crisis-responsive volunteering. The research unfolded across four interconnected stages: identifying structural barriers in the Dnipropetrovsk region's volunteer movement; empirical prototyping of the ICT-enabled solution as an e-democracy module; conceptualizing empirical insights; and adapting technical components to integrate with existing state platforms (such as E-DEM).

Findings show that civic tech solution could function as a dual-purpose system: it is both technological infrastructure and socio-organizational environments. It facilitates new mechanisms for distributed decision-making and transparency, which are particularly vital when traditional democratic mechanisms are under crisis-induced strain. Developed by the authors conceptual model illustrates the multilayered capacity of hybrid sociotechnical architectures to integrate offline and online solidarity networks with digital tools and optimised solutions.

Architecturally, the proposed platform concept relies on three functional pillars designed to optimize collaborative public administration in crisis settings. First, it establishes an infrastructure of trust: by enforcing user authorization through qualified electronic signatures (QES), the platform mitigates opportunistic behavior risks, securing peer-to-peer interactions. Second, it provides geospatial coordination: an interactive map of community needs optimizes volunteer logistics by visualizing distances to requested objectives. Third, it acts as an analytical tool: dashboards visualize real-time community needs, helping to shift local governance efforts from reactive responses to proactive planning.

A key topic of discussion is the acceptable boundary of civil society's intervention in public services. While accepting the critiques on volunteer involvement in humanitarian tasks as a duplication of state functions, it is perceived as critically necessary compensation for temporary institutional incapacity caused by the war. Establishing complementarity, rather than

competition, with public institutions allows to ensure the long-term legitimacy of such civic initiatives and enhance the ecosystem of national public services from grassroots level.

The paper concludes that integrating such civic tech models into the broader public administration ecosystem represents a highly viable pathway for post-war recovery. By institutionalizing volunteer networks on a partnership basis, where civil society executes operational responses while government authorities maintain strategic coordination, Ukraine can solidify a collaborative governance model that fundamentally enhances community resilience in crisis periods.

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