

Development Plan for Phyrtual.org
(1st Draft)

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September 2011

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Abstract

Phyrtual.org is a website dedicated to social innovation, that is, innovation driven by the motivation to improve the lives of all people and, particularly, of the disadvantaged sectors of the population. Phyrtual aims to stimulate and facilitate the creation and widespread diffusion of projects and experiences of social innovation.

The functionality of Phyrtual blends knowledge, arts, social networking and instruments of communication, collaboration, productivity and evaluation to support processes of social innovation. In this environment, people and organizations can explore, find, and participate in social innovations; above all, they can join and collaborate with other people and organizations to create, share and grow their ideas, knowledge, and communities, around projects in social areas such as education, health, poverty-elimination, active ageing, independent living, community development and countless others. As an environment for open and collective social innovation, Phyrtual challenges every project to become a social innovation movement and every participant to become an innovator.

The fundamental units of Phyrtual are projects and people. All other aspects are subordinated to them: navigation, content, instruments, etc. *Empowerment* and *unity* are two keywords in the governance of Phyrtual.

Empowerment is the will and ability of people to shape their own future through the release of their creative and innovative energies. Phyrtual pursues empowerment for all and, particularly, the weakest sectors of the population.

Unity is the will and ability of people to learn and work together to multiply the forces of creation, development, diffusion, implementation, and impact of social innovations.

These principles of empowerment and unity inform the content of Phyrtual governance and development policy and, hence the model of participation by individuals and organizations.

1 Social Innovation Problem or Opportunity Addressed by the Project

Humanity faces massive challenges in the 21st century: some are fully global such as the environment, poverty, the transformations of the education and health systems; others are regional such as the greying of the population in Europe and Japan; others are local such as community development or urban regeneration, etc. At all levels, the answer to these challenges require processes of social innovation that make the best use of integrated “phyrtual” (physical/virtual) strategies and environments supporting them. Fortunately,

knowledge and technological development has created the opportunity to create such “phyrtual” environments. Phyrtual.org is a manifestation of this opportunity and the need for social innovation to tackle humanity’s problems is the *raison d’être* of project Phyrtual.

The geographical scope of Phyrtual.org is global. For this to happen, however, the website needs to develop further, for instance, in terms of languages and access to persons with special needs. There are also infrastructural barriers in terms of Internet access in poor areas of the world, above all, in Africa. This creates a sort of paradox because people suffering from poverty are intended to benefit from Phyrtual.org, yet they lack either physical and/or economic access to Internet. Phyrtual, however, can be useful in supporting the development of social innovations projects aimed at reducing the digital divide and poverty. These projects can help facilitate both: access to computers and Internet and the development of poverty-elimination initiatives in areas currently excluded from the benefits of the technology.

2 Project Purposes and Objectives

The specific objective of Phyrtual.org is to develop, scale up and diffuse globally a virtual environment for social innovation with the following characteristics: evolutionary, interactive, modular and configurable. From the viewpoint of social innovation, the website aims at enriching and empowering people’s and communities’ multi-dimensional potential through the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, arts, positive emotions and values, community building, and the application of supporting instrumentation for all these aspects. It is a virtual environment that integrates with physical innovation environments (Physical & Virtual = Phyrtual) giving rise to Phyrtual movements dedicated to social innovation projects, programmes and initiatives for a better world. Phyrtual intends to be an environment favouring the individual and collective growth of positive human traits in the “battlefield” of humanity.

3 Expected Project Outcome

Project Phyrtual pursues ambitious results in quantitative and qualitative terms. It aspires to become one of the referent environments for social innovation worldwide. At this early stage, the first main result is the development of Phyrtual.org, accompanied by the appearance of the first projects, partnerships and alliances.

It is expected that this activity will grow continuously over time thus generating statistical data about users of various kinds, visits, projects, clicks, partnerships, alliances, project clustering, knowledge objects, creative and learning activities, and so on. Above all, project Phyrtual expects to generate strong value for the growth of social innovation experiences in terms of solidarity, generosity, feelings, knowledge, arts, fun, community building (movements), automatic instrumentation (evaluation) and eventually resources (human, financial, etc.). The development of instrumentation to assess these results is also part of the expected results.

4 Proposed Approach to Tackling the Problem or Opportunity

The attention on social innovations is growing fast and is bound to continue to do so in the future given the local, national, regional, and global challenges facing people, communities and societies. In short, there is a growing demand for social innovation. At the same time, in the age of the knowledge society, the predominance of knowledge, innovation, life-long learning, networks, multimedia, etc. creates the opportunity for the creation and supply of new more holistic approaches to tackling social innovation. Phyrtual results from the convergence of these two societal trends and its particular approach blends:

- (a) integrated physical-virtual vision and strategic thinking for of social innovation processes;
- (b) sociotechnical configuration offering an environment to nurture phyrtual social innovation movements in the style of open innovation;
- (c) codified-knowledge and active-learning approach to learning and social innovation;
- (d) holistic approach to people's multi-dimensionality reflected in the architecture of the website.

These features and others found in Phyrtual.org offer an effective environment to support the development of social innovation processes. In fact, the feedback from people working in social innovation has always been highly encouraging.

The achievement of the expected results requires a multi-pronged approach to promotion, dissemination, implementation and continuous development of the website's functionality. This means the engagement of many more people and organizations contributing to the website's various areas: projects, content, technology, community and so on. In this respect, it is useful that Phyrtual

is a pioneering site (see history of Phyrtual at <http://www.phyrtual.org/en/project/953/story/e-inclusion/the-story-of-the-vision-and-development-of-phyrtualorg>). The risk exist however that this will not remain so for long, precisely due to the popularity of social innovation. For this reason, Phyrtual.org has entered the public phase of introduction to many stakeholders, covering opportunities from joint projects to publications.

5 Project Details

5.1 *Phyrtual Products and Service*

Phyrtual is both a product and a service. As a product Phyrtual.org is a systemic online environment devised to support processes of social innovation. As most online environments, Phyrtual is an evolutionary product whose functionality evolves qualitatively and quantitatively through a dynamics of open innovation, that is, through the participation of its multiple stakeholder.

As a service, Phyrtual offers social innovation projects the possibility of growing and communicating widely the knowledge created by their respective communities. Indeed, it offers social innovators the possibility of communicating their projects in the ways they find most appropriate, including arts and fun. But Phyrtual does not stop at flows of knowledge objects, the website's social networking capacity facilitates direct peer-to-peer relations and hence, the possibility of flows of tacit or non-explicit knowledge, as well as flows of mentoring, solidarity, emotions, etc. In short, flows of the positive aspects of humanity. The full set of services includes instruments of communication, collaboration, productivity and evaluation.

As a systemic product and service, Phyrtual puts people at the centre of its evolution: as developers, resource-providers, beneficiaries and so on.

5.2 *Specific Customers and Users*

People supporting and participating in social innovation processes are all Phyrtual users and customers. Social innovations can involve any or all sectors of society (e.g., for-profit, government, non-profit, and community organizations); they may take many forms from projects that improve the lives of specific disadvantaged people to large social movements that seek to benefit the entire population as in the case of the environment. People can play multiple roles inside social

innovations: social innovators and entrepreneurs, developers, champions, financial donors, in-kind donors, teachers, volunteers, supporters, beneficiaries, etc.

All these people are potential users of Phyrtual and, given the huge challenges facing the world in the 21st century (e.g., education, poverty, health, environment, peace and security), the potential numbers are very large indeed. At the core of the growth of Phyrtual, however, are the social innovators who are the initiators and the energy pulsing social innovation processes everywhere.

5.3 *Strategic Partners*

Phyrtual is at the start of its public life and it is beginning to enter in strategic partnerships and alliances. **Partnerships** are agreements signed between organizations to work together in activities that advance the technical, content, organizational and social evolution of Phyrtual. **Alliances** may take shape between one or more organizations, for example, around a specific project involving Phyrtual. The partnerships and alliances are established through the Fondazione Mondo Digitale and they are just beginning to accumulate.

Partnerships so far include:

Viraçao www.viracao.org/ - Brazil

Aequinet www.aequinet.it/ - Italy

Fundetec www.fundetec.es/mte/home_fundetec/index.html - Spain

Datamation Foundation <http://datamationfoundation.org/> India

MitraMandal Foundation www.mitramandal.org/ - India

The University of Edinburgh www.ed.ac.uk - UK

Alliances involving the use of Phyrtual in projects include the following organizations:

- Auser <http://www1.auser.it/IT/HomePage> - Italia

- Anteas <http://www.anteasnazionale.it/> - Italia

- Romanian Society for lifelong learning (<http://www.srep.ro/>) - Rumania

- 50 Plus Hellas (<http://www.50plus.gr/english>) - Greece

- ICVolunteers, (<http://www.icvolunteers.org/>) - International

- Zentrum fuer Soziale Innovation (ZSI) <https://www.zsi.at/> - Austria

- Delft University of Technology <http://www.tudelft.nl/> - The Netherlands

- Social Innovation Fund - Lithuania

- Centre for Visualisation and Interactivity in Education (CVIV) - Czech Republic
- Associazione Nuovi Europei - Italia
- Lazio Form <http://www.lazioform.it/> - Italia

Contacts, conversations and negotiations for other partnerships and alliances are under way.

5.4 Competition

At the moment, there is no direct competition to Phyrtual. There are projects under development but with different scope, development model, and target users and customers. The following judgement is still valid: “*People are clamouring for ways to use social media for social change*” (Aaker and Smith, 2011,p.31)¹

The field of social innovation, however, is so huge that the issue of competition is very much one of strategic mindset, even in the case of similar websites. Competition can be seen as antagonistic "zero-sum," where the success on one player is seen as the defeat of another. Or, it can be seen as non-antagonistic to the point that collaboration can go together with competition, as in the practice of "co-opetition" implemented by the business world.

Furthermore, if the purpose of social innovation is to benefit all people and, particularly, the most disadvantaged sector of the population, then competition cannot be antagonistic and with the intention of monopolizing the field. This goes against the need for empowerment of as many people as possible. True, not all experiences will succeed, but where it is possible to deliver better value, collaboration is not just desirable, it is a must.

5.5 Process Technology

At this initial stage, the process technology is straightforward. Hardware includes a few computers and a server. Software includes Drupal modules and web development software such as JavaScript, php and others. It also includes graphic software such as PhotoShop and Illustrator. Network technology is at 10MB.

¹ Aaker, J. and Smith, A. (2011), The Dragonfly Effect, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter, pp.30-35.

This process technology will undertake substantial upgrading as Phyrtual begins to grow. For instance, the server and connectivity capacity will be quickly challenged by such growth. A mixture of internal resources and in-kind and financial donations constitute the main source of technological resources. Thus, individuals and organizations supporting the project can make contributions in kind (e.g., tools, equipment, software, connectivity, etc.) or support their acquisition.

5.6 *Backing Organization*

Phyrtual.org is backed by the Fondazione Mondo Digitale (www.mondodigitale.org). The FMD has provided the incubating environment to transform the vision into the reality we see today.

The growth of Phyrtual is most certain to require an increase in the number of backing organizations and the team is already engaged in talks for this purpose.

5.7 *Organization and Personnel of the Project*

Today, Phyrtual has a project organization inside the Fondazione Mondo Digitale. The governance is informal with roles automatically allocated on the base of expertise. Everybody refers to the person providing the website vision and development strategy. This person is the Scientific Director of the FMD and Professor of Technology Strategy at the University of Edinburgh (UK). Everybody interacts with everybody else working in Phyrtual: 1 person working on technical development, 1 person working on graphic development, 2 persons working on content development. Note that most of this work is carried part-time.

This organization will change substantially with the growth of the website and its community. The new organization will follow the pattern of an open innovation process, in which many individuals and teams will work in the development and content of Phyrtual. The organization and functionality of the website is highly modular and this characteristic will facilitate the formation of teams of knowledge volunteers who will advance and propose modules. This Phyrtual “movement of movements” approach is valid for all social innovation projects in the website, including the Phyrtual project itself.

At the same time, the core organization of Phyrtual.org will have to reinforce its coordinating and development capacities. A small number of fully dedicated personnel will be needed for the

efficient and effective performance of the core organization in the new public phase. Voluntary work, however, remains a strategic source for technical, knowledge, promotional, and any other kind of human resources required for the success of Phyrtual.

5.8 *Financial Plan*

Phyrtual intends to build primarily on the forces of solidarity, generosity, service, and belief in a better world. Profit-making certainly has a role in Phyrtual as long as it is subordinated to social goals, as happens, for instance, in the case of social enterprises, social firms, and social innovations originating in any sector of society (social, for-profit, government and community sectors).

Phyrtual.org will seek to implement at least four income-raising mechanisms: (a) direct cash donations by people and organizations supporting the website, (b) subscriptions, (c) collaborative projects and grants, and (d) service provision such as courses and consultancy paid on either voluntary or fixed basis.

It is envisaged that same income-raising mechanisms will be available to all social innovation projects inside Phyrtual.org.

The saying reads: “money makes the world go round.” In Phyrtual we must work to ensure that it goes round the well-being and growth of all people and the planet. They must be at the centre of humanity's development for the sake of all present and future generations.

The following financial estimates of cost and income are for the main items of the first half-year period of transition from incubated part-time project to fully-fleshed public operation. If we consider that most of the costs could also be covered by donations in kind and volunteer work, then the cash flow required could be a fraction of the full amount of money required without this support.

Estimated Fixed and Monthly Costs of Project (To be filled)	
<i>Fixed (One-off costs)</i>	Amount in €
IT equipment (computers, printer, etc.)	
Office Equipment (desks, shelves, etc.)	
Office Space	

Total fixed cost	
<i>Variable (Monthly costs)</i>	Amount in €
Personnel (software development, Technical support, graphic design, content development, PR/marketing, management)	
Server Hosting and Connectivity (including telephony)	
Running costs (stationary, etc.)	
Total variable costs	

Estimated Income Generated by the Project (To be filled)	
Item	Amount in €
Donations	
Subscriptions	
Collaborative projects, grants and services	
Total	

5.9 Key Milestones

The following are some tentative Milestones covering the period until end of July 2011.

Key Milestones (tentative)	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Target Dates</i>
Informal presentation of Phyrtual at Gdanzk, Poland. European meeting on e-Inclusion	5th October 2011
Number of Italian projects: 10 Number of International projects: 15 7 articles in different media (e.g., newspapers, journals, magazines, blogs, etc.)	By end of October
Negotiations opened with 5 major organizations	By end of October
Participation of Phyrtual in 2 new European Projects	By mid-November
Phyrtual presented in 5 major conferences/gatherings.	By end December

Broad definition of Phyrtual version 2	By end December
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5.10 Future Project Development

The future development of Phyrtual coincides with its full entrance into public life. What happens during the first six months, or a year, of this process will determine completely the medium- and long-term future of the website. The architecture and features of the website play an important part, along with the development (business) model, including governance, chosen for its growth. Some key features of this model are as follows:

Phyrtual is open to all individuals and organizations involved in one way or another in the development of social innovation projects. The condition is to register in the website and respect its codes of conduct, privacy, copyright, and terms of service. At this level, all social innovation projects have autonomy of content and unity of governance inside Phyrtual.org. Indeed, projects leaders, managers and participants are free to choose the governance of interactions and activities inside their own projects. Phyrtual.org offers the project-community the possibility to configure in different forms the interaction among its members.

Furthermore, under certain conditions, Phyrtual’ administrators may license it to organizations using it exclusively for social innovation. These organizations will have autonomy of development for localization, culturalization, and the addition of new functionality. This autonomy, however, should not lead to fragmentation of the Phyrtual movement, it must actually enrich it and enhance it. Thus, some “unity” conditions may include: (a) obligation to show visibly that the website is part of the Phyrtual community, through, for instance, the use of the Phyrtual logo and name; (b) obligation to maintain connectivity with the original Phyrtual.org website; (c) obligation to make freely available to a central Phyrtual repository or library any new functionality that may help enhance the social innovations pursued by other members of the Phyrtual community. At all times, anybody can contribute ideas, instruments and functionality to enhance the operation of all projects in Phyrtual.org. The result would lead to the emergence of a kind of utility for social innovation projects worldwide: a global social innovation utility.

There are three possibilities of autonomous sub-Phyrtual websites: thematic, geographic-linguistic and the combination between the two. Thematic websites are content-focused and do not have

geographic-linguistic limitation. Consideration must be given, however, of the thematic development of Phyrtual.org. Geographic sites are location-and-linguistically focused and do not have limitations of content. Consideration must be given, however, of the geographical-linguistic development of Phyrtual. The combination of the two is Phyrtual.org with no limitation of content or geography-language. Between all these types of websites, there will be a coordination guided by Phyrtual.org to avoid harmful fragmentation and reinforce the advantages of unity.