

Active Citizen

Improved participation with Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality



Big data & dashboards



Open data visualisations



**ACTIVE
CITIZEN**



Assistants



Assemblies

The overwhelming and ever increasing mass of information that we need to make informed decisions is a major societal challenge which severely affects citizens capabilities to assess data and understand evidence. Active Citizen is an open source project that will simplify citizens participation by bringing Artificial Intelligence algorithms and Virtual Reality to citizens for democratic and civic purposes.

Citizens must have a strong voice in our civic debate if we want to create and maintain a healthy society. The key objective for Active Citizen is to confront the trend of decreasing formal political participation by improving communications and quality of the debate.

We will use personal Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistants, Virtual Reality (VR) interfaces and combine online and offline citizens assemblies to unite their respective strengths. This will increase bottom-up citizen participation and help people make more informed decisions with less time and effort. **We are taking participation to the next level by using state of the art technology to make participation simple, fast and interesting.**

Using Active Citizen people will be able to communicate, debate and cooperate in an ordered and structured way with each other from all over the world. They will come together to find common interests, build their future and improve society using more attractive and easier methods than is available today. We truly believe that with Active Citizens we can make a real difference and change the world together.

A glimpse into our future

Alex has her breakfast while her AI Assistant (AIA) tells her about an open meeting in City Hall concerning cycling regulations and local planning. Alex confirms she'll be there and her AIA creates an info pack about the issue to help her plan a proposal for the meeting.

Alex uses her time on the train to review AIA's ideas for her proposal. Some require a few minutes as Alex adds some details from her own experience but mostly it's a matter of reviewing quickly and confirming. She actually has time for a short nap before her train arrives.

Meanwhile AIA creates a plan that uses an AI managed group to brainstorm and prioritize the best ideas and debates them in combined online and offline assemblies. The result will be a plan for the neighborhood to be presented formally to City Hall with the signatures of supporting participants. The first task is to formulate a plan that will have wide approval from citizens.

A few days later AIA reminds Alex that an assembly is starting in her group. Alex grabs her tablet and enters a virtual world mirroring her neighborhood. At a visualization of her idea she checks the debate once more before transporting to the assembly hall where both online and offline participants have equal status and communication possibilities.

The meeting starts and due to their preplanning Alex and AIA manage to get her planning proposal for the neighbourhood approved by a big majority of voting citizens. It will be submitted to the municipal council with the support of almost 30% of the voting population of the neighborhood behind it.

Objectives

The key objective for Active Citizen is to confront the trend of decreasing formal political participation. Also to increase the quality and quantity of political and civic participation by making it easy, effective and fun with young people being the most important target group.

With all the online opportunities and data on myriads of websites and digital online tools, it's crucial to provide citizens with simple means to get the information they need as easily and quickly as possible, in an easily understood and digested form. With the combined and intertwined help of AI and VR we will help citizens make better decisions with less effort.

We will make digital democracy and civic group work appealing to citizens in the social context of online presence. In over two decades of internet usage a lot of our actions online have become intuitive. Digital democracy must learn from popular social sites and online games in order to meet citizens where and how we want to be. **Combining AI and VR opens up revolutionary possibilities for achieving those objectives in a more autonomous way and to make participation simpler for everyone.**

Progress

We're building Active Citizen on over 8 years of open source civic software development. The Citizens Foundations "Your Priorities" open-source e-democracy software was created in 2009 and has been in lean user centric development since then. It has been used by more than 600.000 people and has helped improve many communities worldwide.

Amongst successful Your Priorities projects are the Better Reykjavik participatory democracy and budgeting in the capital of Iceland and the Rahvakogu (People's Assembly) project in Estonia which has improved the Estonian legal environment. It has been used in many other countries including UK, USA, Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia and Australia.

Your Priorities has already proven it can increase measurable and meaningful citizen participation. By developing and using Active Citizen with Your Priorities we will extend and increase the impact of citizens on their society.

The AI assistant

- ❑ Shows citizens what they need to see
- ❑ Presents and manages participation opportunities
- ❑ Collects and processes data for better understanding
- ❑ Learns your interests, needs and opinions



The VR world

- ❑ Aids understanding of big data through 3D visuals
- ❑ Merges online and offline participation in group assemblies
- ❑ Adaptable user interface for different needs
- ❑ Uses democracy games to improve civic skills



While continuously conducting research we are progressively implementing AI and VR features in new prototypes. Our test results indicate that the use of AI and VR can help organize and communicate information according to the needs of the user and that merging online and offline meetings will increase participation.

In order to design, develop and test Active Citizen, pilot experiments will be run in co-operation with established citizen communities and civil societies in Estonia, Iceland and the UK. The project brings together top social science research teams and leading AI and VR development teams with user communities around Europe to build upon work carried out from the seed-funded CHEST project and volunteer prototype work since 2013. **Active Citizen will be a fluid combination of many procedures, functions and technologies that will combine to make civic life simpler and yet more productive.**

Active Citizen will work well with other electronic democracy applications and websites. It's design philosophy is API and mobile first and we will offer a comprehensive set of Web Components along with clear restful APIs for easy integration into any modern project.

In short

Active Citizen will make it easy to actively promote the passions, opinions and plans of citizens and groups and it will be a strong positive force in society and civic collaboration. At first on a neighborhood scale but eventually in larger communities as usage, expertise and awareness of the tool increases.

Citizens will be able to have their say on decisions affecting them as well as help define the political agenda and top priorities of their group, neighborhood, municipality or even country. This will enable a more enlightened dialogue between citizens and local and national governments which can also use Active Citizen technology for internal administration. **Active Citizen empowers citizens to increase the quality of their ideas, debate and decisions to improve their communities.**

It's been a year since Alex and AIA started their environmental group. Their plans to improve their neighborhood were submitted to City Hall with the signatures. The authorities have already implemented lower speed limits on many streets in the neighborhood and are having open talks with citizens on other possibilities and solutions. Alex sometimes drops in virtually but is content to let others lead this process, she has done her bit and enjoys the results.

For more information please contact us at citizens@citizens.is or +354 8978229



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