RUSTIK

Gloucestershire

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CCRI
UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GRCC

Experiment Overview

Objective
The experiment will enable the collection and analysis of fine-grained, rural data, gathered through community and social organisations

Relevance
The experiment advances digital transition by supporting policies of digital inclusion and helps community and social organisations to better understand their impacts.

Key innovation
The innovation is a prototype 'Smart Dashboard'. This allows a big range of data sets to be uploaded and cross-referenced. It can also rapidly produce AI-generated text reports.

Experiment Progress

Transition challenge
Gloucestershire Living Lab is concerned with digital transformation. The LL is especially interested in equity considerations linked to the migration of social and public services towards on-line formats and how this process affects rural dwellers.

Barriers to digital inclusion include:
→ lack of IT skills
→ lack of money for on-line subscriptions (e.g. WiFi/phone),
→ lack of access to hardware
→ reluctance to change existing practices.

The LL partners have been working to support digital transition:

GRCC	CCRI/UoG
Distribution of free SIM cards/ repurposed computers	Development and prototyping of a Smart Dashboard for rural social service commissioners and providers
Running public 'digi-hubs' and one-to-one support for digital health care and employment access	Research to inform the digital strategy
Stakeholder engagement	Stakeholder engagement

Jan – April 2024: Engagement with stakeholders.
→ Digital inclusion advocates
→ Policy-makers
→ Participation in the County Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy workshops
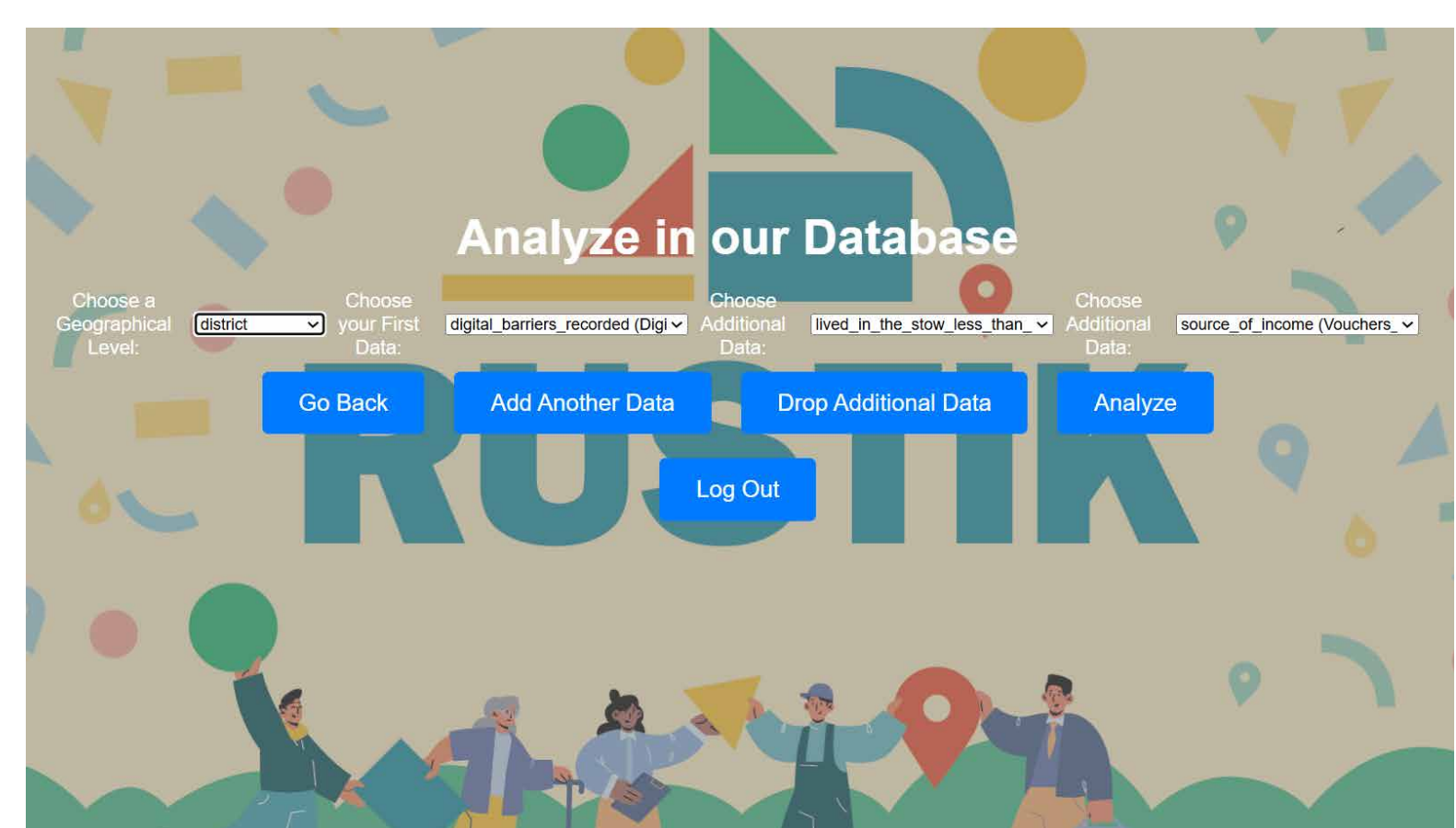
May – Oct 2024: Prototyping
→ Construction of the Smart dashboard
→ Participatory data collection with focus on rural areas and marginalised groups
→ Internal testing
→ Individual 'live-testing' with stakeholders
→ Group testing in public events

Methods
→ Stakeholder engagement via GRCC networks
→ Internal recruitment of a PhD student (UoG School of Business, Computing & Social Sciences)
→ Protoyping with one 'friendly' voluntary sector organisation
→ GRCC legacy project (ACORN - Advancing Communities and Organisations through Resources and Nurturing)

SMART DASHBOARD
→ User-Friendly Interface
→ Secure Registration Process
→ Multi-Database Cross-Reference Analysis
→ Data Import Functionality
→ Automated Smart Processing
→ Comprehensive Analysis
→ Save and Store Results
→ Advanced User Security
→ Ongoing development- additional analytical tools e.g. heatmap, etc.

Key Findings
→ The SMART dashboard works and has great potential
→ Getting local data is difficult and takes time – stakeholders' capacity is limited
→ Local policy work on digital inclusion is not directly rural.

Learning
→ Engaging stakeholders early in the process
→ GRCC networks provide ongoing training and support for digital literacy which has offered good access to stakeholders
→ Cross-sectoral data integration helps address digital exclusion but requires standardisation and harmonisation

Reflections
→ The tech side is successful - the integration of AI within the dashboard provides a real-time insights; has potential for significantly improving decision-making capabilities for local organisations.
→ Finding a profile/traction among digital actors is not easy – it's a changing and fragmented field. No single authority is leading.
→ The 'third sector' is really stretched and has limited ability to examine impact but welcomes help. We need to institutionalise our advances by working with the authorities that commission rural social services

Next steps
→ Refine the prototype further, testing it in 'real-life' situations
→ Transfer the dashboard to the GRCC's legacy project
→ Provide advocacy at local and national levels to support rural considerations in digital inclusion strategies

Mohammad Chizari presenting/demonstrating the Smart Dashboard at the Gloucestershire DataDay 'Platform Face-Off' and team photo.

www.rustik-he.eu