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CONSUL CON

DAY 2 - 13:45 - Assembly Area

Score Your Platform: Applying the Democratic Value to Evaluate Digital Participation

WORKSHOP

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Session recap

At a glance

Alexandros Melidis, director of GFOSS (the Greek Free/Open Source Software Society), PhD candidate in digital participation at the University of Athens and member of the CONSUL DEMOCRACY Foundation board, ran an interactive workshop based on the framework developed in his doctoral research. After a short presentation of its rationale and seven dimensions, participants split into small groups, chose a platform to evaluate (their own city's or a well-known one), scored it with rubrics and reported back. Most of the session was group work.

Key messages

- Legal mandates and platform features do not equal democratic quality: more platforms do not automatically mean more citizen influence.
- Feature checklists show what a platform can do, but a platform can tick every box and still leave citizens without power.
- Maturity models and Arnstein's ladder assume participation evolves in a linear way, but in practice it can stagnate or regress with political will.
- User satisfaction surveys measure perception, not power: satisfied users can still have zero structural influence.
- The central question is: who holds power in the process?
- Self-assessment with clear rubrics helps practitioners discover concrete, sometimes simple, improvements.

Facts, figures and references

- Seven dimensions: co-design, co-production, co-governance, co-analysis, co-evaluation, inclusion and integrity.
- Reference cases evaluated by the author: Decide Madrid, Decidim Barcelona and Greece's opengov.
- Example result: a city CONSUL platform scored 2.6 overall ('basic level of online participation').
- Worksheets and templates are published on GitHub.

Takeaways for the community

- Practitioners can use the framework as a self-assessment tool to identify gaps in power-sharing, not just in features.
- Quick wins can emerge from the exercise, such as making published results downloadable and establishing clear feedback loops.
- The framework offers a common language for comparing CONSUL implementations across cities.