Integration of context information from different sources: Unified Communication, Telco 2.0 and M2M

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Abstract — **The paper presents an idea of a context-aware application, which collects context data from many different sources, stores them in a dedicated database and makes use of it to support flexible scenarios for end users. Using open APIs it integrates different types of context information provided by: Unified Communication system, APIs exposed by communication service providers and information from Machine to Machine (M2M) framework. Methods for recording and unifying different types of context data are proposed and their performance is compared with results for the most popular database structures. A context-aware contact list application for a mobile phone user is presented as an example illustrating the main ideas of the paper.**

I. Introduction

Nowadays, value of information about context of communication is growing and having more impact on next generation of context aware services. Companies such as Google, Twitter or Facebook which are in possession of large databases which contain mostly context information [1] became major players in the ICT market. Information about users and their activities is the base of social networks' owners' business model and has started to be monetized, e.g. mainly in personalized focused advertising.

Availability and usage of precise context information has a very big potential for enterprises and constitutes a catalyst for innovative ICT systems and applications [2]. From a mobile phone user's point of view, participation in social networks implies a change of a lifestyle. People want to "stay in touch" which means that they have to be reachable via phone independently of their location. Most of the businessmen (but not only) can't imagine working without multiple phone numbers: a personal number to contact family, an office phone number to contact coworkers and a business number to communicate with customers.

The idea of easy contact for business users is one of the principles of Unified Communications services – a very popular communication trend in enterprise area. Typically it is implemented with:

- One number service – functionality allows the user to define and manage preferred communication devices via voice and video. Despite of using different terminals, subscriber is identified by one universal telephone number.
- Integrated application – single application supporting in a unified way many different communication channels: voice, video, e-mail, voice mail, Instant Messaging and web collaboration.

Efficient usage of Unified Communication systems and their features requires interaction with the end system user. Usually a user has to pay attention to and consciously set his or her status in UC application (ready, out of office, on holiday etc.), set and activate auto response in corporate e-mail system or set an active phone (office phone, mobile phone, softphone etc.).

From the end user the perspective, these processes preferably should be automated to ease him/her of manual setting of an active phone. All information required for Unified Communication system can be acquired by sensors or software components taking advantage of context information.

The idea of automatic information exchange between devices and sensors is similar to the smart home automation concept, and M2M systems are a very promising source of context information e.g. for potential commercial systems.

The main aim of this paper is propose method to store in one database context information characterized of vari-

ous data structure from different mentioned above sources (UC, Telco and M2M systems).

II. Background

A. Existing solutions

Many context-aware computing paradigms have been developed in the recent years. For example, Cisco context-aware Healthcare solution, which is a tool for monitoring and simplifying business operations in hospitals [3]. However the most popular context-aware solution is currently the Google Ads Gadget, which displays context based personalized commercials to users browsing a specific website [4].

Cisco solution [3] uses RFID [5] (Radio Frequency Identification) technology for real time tracking of patients, medical personnel and hospital assets, what is crucial for providing the best quality health care services and optimization of workflow and medical staff management. The uniqueness of the approach stems from the fact that Cisco health care solution treats equipment and machines, such as X-ray or wheelchairs, as objects which are considered as the source of the context information. Context aware systems also bring new features into the survey conducting area [6], [7], [8], [9]. In this field, gathering context data and taking advantage of data collected by mobile devices, such as smart phones or tablets, allows developers to invent useful mechanisms which in turn allow to specify the exact target group of a survey. A solution presented in *A survey on context-aware systems* [6] uses a variety of many flexible sources, including widgets, wireless sensors and middleware infrastructure, which is somewhat similar to the mechanism presented in this paper.

B. Unified Communication

Unified Communication [10], [11] systems constitute an important element of private communication networks dedicated to enterprises. Many vendors (e.g.: Avaya, Cisco, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle and Siemens) offer comprehensive UC solutions. An example of such system developed by Siemens Enterprise Communications is OpenScape UC application.

UC system offers many features, e.g. standardization of communications services, support for user mobility, communication medium neutrality and support for any type of equipment (type of terminal). Possibility of virtualization of resources and services and their exposition by using LAN, WAN or Internet networks is of utmost importance for business users. Openscape UC (Fig. 1.) offers VoIP (Voice over IP) services (implemented in the OpenScape Voice subsystem), video communication between employees (OpenScape Video) and integration of e-mail and voice in a single message box (OpenScape Messaging). Integration of external applications and systems with OpenScape system is possible due to availability of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), implemented in the UC system. Its APIs are exposed as Web Services and are offered using a Service-oriented architecture model (SOA) and SOAP Protocol (Simple Object Application Protocol). By taking advantage of UC open APIs, external developers can create their own specific application and UC system extensions described in [11] and [12].

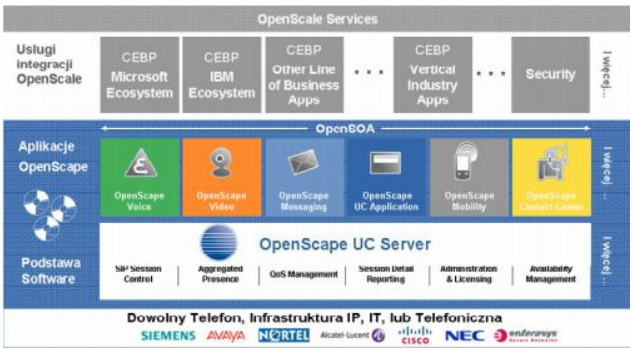

Fig 1.OpenScape UC system architecture [11]

C. Telco 2.0

Telco 2.0 [13] is an idea based on exposition of Communication Service Providers APIs for external developers and third party companies on the Web. From the technical point of view, telecom operator's APIs are exposed using a dedicated entity – a Service Delivery Platform (SDP). An SDP is located between the operating network and the Web. Its southbound interfaces are connected to the operating network and integrate it with enablers offering telecommunications capabilities (e.g.: SMS, MMS, USSD, voice call, etc.). The northbound interface exposes open APIs as Web Services on the Web. The SDP is also connected to an Operations Support Systems responsible for: maintenance, inventory, provisioning and fault management as well as Business Support Systems (responsible for order handling, billing, payments etc.). There are two ways of exposing Telco 2.0 APIs – either via SOAP [15] interfaces or by using REST architectural style [14].

Telecommunications service delivery platforms (SDP) usually allow access to their capabilities in the service-oriented architecture (Parlay X specification [16]) or resource oriented Web Services (RESTful) model compliant with the OneAPI specification [17]. By using open Telco 2.0 APIs, it is possible to develop new applications and services merging IT and the Internet world with telecommunication area [12], [18], [19].

D. M2M approach

The Machine to machine (M2M) concept refers to technologies that allow both the wireless and wireline systems to communicate with other devices with the same capabilities. M2M uses devices, such as e.g. sensors or

meters, to capture events or current state indicators (temperature, inventory level, etc.), which are then relayed via a network (wireless, wireline or hybrid) to an application (software program), that translates them into meaningful information (for example, items need to be restocked) [20]. Such communication was originally implemented using a remote network of machines which relayed information back to a central hub for analysis, which would then be rerouted into a system like a personal computer.

III. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

Our solution integrates three systems as a context data source. (Fig 2). The first data source is the Unified Communication system. Using the SDK (Software Development Kit) provided by Siemens, it is possible to implement a service which captures events reflecting subscribers activity, e.g. phone status and change of user status. The Openscape UC API enables implementation of the click to call feature as a dedicated button at the website. Web Services exposed by Communication Service Provider in the Telco 2.0 model allow to collect context data from mobile phones (e.g. using terminal status and terminal location APIs). The third source of context information are events generated by M2M devices. This last area is a comprehensive source, which can send information of all type (presence, alarms, user activities etc.).

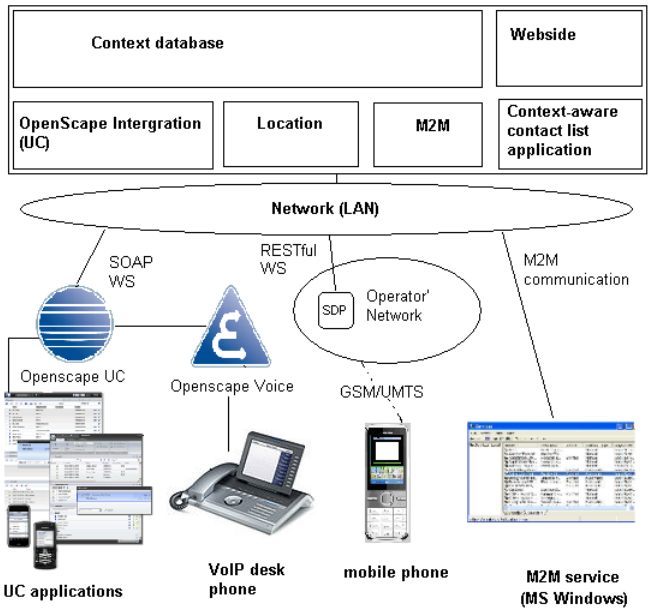

Fig 2. Architecture of system

This chapter presents the main modules comprising the system collecting context information from different sources.

A. Database

The data base is the most important part of our solution. It plays the role of the data repository collecting context records from three mentioned above sources. The data base has to be: scalable, easy to access and fast. Meeting these requirements is easy in case of small databases but must be relaxed in case of large systems handling thousands of records.

The implemented MySQL database uses a relational data model and specifies four main entities (Fig 3.):

- *User* – entity stores information about the user: login information for OpenScape management portal, name, surname, Openscape VoIP terminal and mobile terminal numbers as well as the home address.
- *Context_data* – stores context information: timestamp and context data set which is JSON form of context information (for example latitude and longitude).
- *Context_type* (Fig 4.) – a table which contains information about the context data source.
- *Param_type* – a table which assists in detection of the type of parameters coded in context data set (JSON).

The presented database schema guaranties to be scalable – e.g. there is no need to add new table when the system is integrated with a new context information source in the future. Data sets are easy to access because of the usage of JSON [21] format, which is supported by many programming environments.

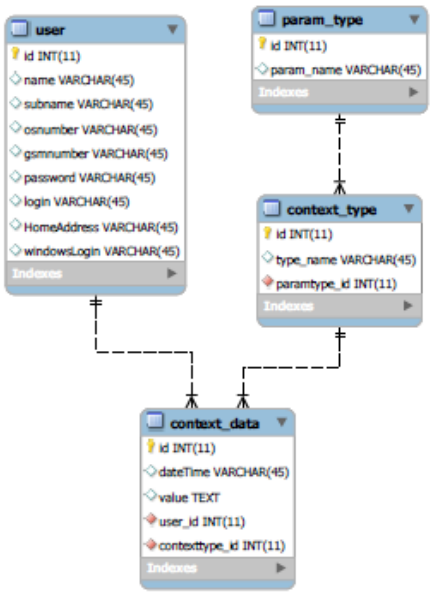

Fig 3. ER diagram of database

id	name	paramtype_id
1	openstageMediaStat	4
2	openstagestat	5
3	gsmlocation	1
6	systemlogin	6

Fig 4. Context_type entity

B. Location module

The location module is responsible for collection of information about a mobile phone's geolocation. The location data is collected using terminal location API calls, based on those exposed in the Web by Orange using a dedicated Service Delivery Platform (SDP). The response received from *Terminal Location API* contains approximated latitude and longitude of the mobile terminal. The location information is stored in the database using pooling method. The measurements are repeated every minute. Unfortunately, the pooling method is not very efficient in terms of performance, but currently there aren't any other methods available for small developers and external companies that could be exposed on the Web by Communication Service Provider in the Telco 2.0 model.

C. OpenScape integration module

Siemens provides a high level Software Development Kit for programmers, which allows to implement a method responsible for integration with a UC system. Its main role considered here is implementation of a method, which captures events in relation to the change of media (terminal) status or user status in UC system. There are three possible states of media status: 0. *UNKNOWN* (when the observing user is not authorized to see the recipient status) 1. *AVALIABLE* (when there is no call on the phone line) and 2. *UNAVAILABLE* (when the user is already busy in a call). The events, like e.g. change of the status are captured and stored in the database with a timestamp and an appropriate JSON value.

The second parameter correlated with the user activity by the presence of API is the user status. There are 6 possible states of user status: 1 - *Do not disturb* 2 - *Be right back* 3 - *Unavailable* 4 - *Busy* 5 - *In meeting* 10 – *Available*. This parameter is stored in the database – when an event (triggered by the change of the status) appears. The user status information is stored (in the JSON format) with a timestamp in the database.

Another method implemented in this module is the *click to call* feature. This method requires user login and password information to recognize an active phone from which the call originated.

D. M2M module

This application was implemented in Windows Service form which starts with the user's login and ends with the system user's logout. The module collects information about the user logged on to the workstation. The name of the user is sent to the main system and is stored in the database, using timestamp in JSON format.

E. Module Website

Module Website – the graphical user interface was created using ASP.NET framework. The module contains 4 subpages: *login.aspx*, *contactlist.aspx*, *adduser.aspx* and *about.aspx*. Only a successfully authorized user is able to use the portal. This module implements login and password; the ones required by portal are the login and password from OpenScape UC system. If the logged user is also the administrator, he or she is able to manage the system's administration panel, e.g. add or remove users to the system, (Fig. 4) define work address and home address.

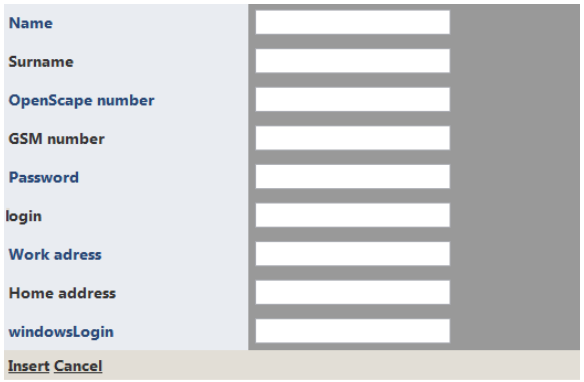

Fig. 4. Module Website - add user form

To add a user, all fields are required, with the condition of setting a correct login and password (same as OpenScape UC). The ending user application of the website is *contactlist.aspx* which contains all contacts, context data and the click to call button (Fig. 5.).

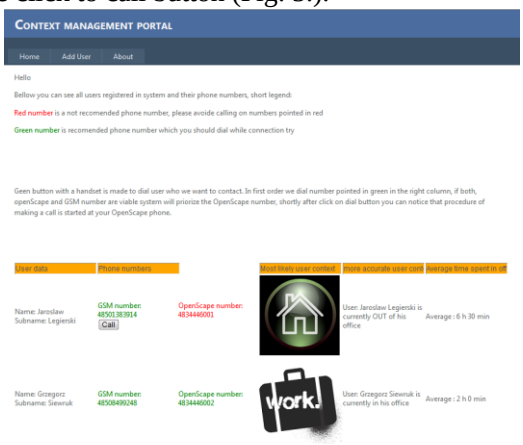

Fig. 5. Context-aware contact list application

F. Context-aware contact list application

The contact list application contains user information, such as: name, surname, mobile terminal number and OpenScape UC number (VoIP office phone). The database also contains location information, such as the user's home address and work address. The application based on the context data can recognize the actual location of the user (using Telco 2.0 and UC data) and can present more specific context data e.g. if the user is at work, it shows the average time spent in the office (M2M based information). The application can even suggest the number of users recommended to contact them. The website also has a "call" button which allows to dial the recommended phone number using the OpenScape UC system.

IV. SIMPLE CONTEXT BASED DECISION ALGORITHM

This chapter, based on the contact list application features, presents a simple context-based decision algorithm. The first column of this application (Fig. 5) contains contact data, such as the name and surname from the database. The next column named "Most likely user context" is a field based on information acquired from the Telco 2.0 location API.

The application uses Google Map API to recognize the home address and work address based on geolocation (longitude and latitude), which is recognized by using the distance between the user's current location (the latest database record) – and simultaneously between the current location and home location. If the distances calculated above are less than 1000m, the algorithm determines that the user is in the defined location (work or home).

The next column - "More accurate user context" - contains information from the data collected from M2M application. If the user is already logged on to the workstation, the algorithm decides that the user is in office and vice versa: if the user is not logged on to system, the result is interpreted as "out of office".

The column "Average time spent in office" is based on the data received from M2M application. The application measures the time from the timestamp between login and logout, and calculates an average value.

The last column named "Phone numbers" contains all phone numbers defined for a specific user. If the phone number is underlined in red – the number is not recommended to dial, when it is in green– the number is recommended for use.

There are several conditions that must be met for the number to be underlined in red: for the context information from OpenScape UC – *AggregatedMediaStatus* attribute must have value *Unavailable*; *userStatus – In Meeting*, *Unavailable*, *Busy* or *Do not disturb*; however, if *AggregatedMediaStatus* is Available but the user is out of office, the number will also be underlined in red.

Finally, by clicking the "call" button, the user can dial the number which is underlined in green. When all numbers are highlighted in green, the number allocated to Openscape system has higher priority.

V. INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND SECURITY

A. Context Conflicts

There is possibility that context informations which are obtained from number of different sources may conflict. Situation like this can happen for example when subscribed user by mistake leave his mobile phone in the home. In this case M2M module has discovered user as logged in and present in office however Telco 2.0 module is pointing that user is being in home.

It is extremly important to deal with this kind of situations properly because any inconsistency has impact on reliability of presented solution. For example in the scenario described above, source which can authenticate user is selected as stronger source and other conflicted information will be ignored (however user will be informed that there is something wrong with his devices). In order to be able to use M2M module, user has to be succesfully logged to his computer by providing correct password or pluging his USB token with certificate.

Submitted solution is efficient but using semantic algorithms should be considered.

B. Information Security

As it is described in the previous chapters presented system is processing sensitive informations, wherefore there must be implemented methods which pervent to loss of those informations.

There are several mechanisms to perform these tasks both the application side and server side. Bellow is list of basic requirements to provide security for this kind of environment.

Application:

- Enforce users to use strong passwords (Uppercase letters, special signs, numbers),
- Enforce users to change their passwords every 30 days,
- User roles which give the certain user possibility to perform only allowed operations.

Server:

- Antivirus software up to date,
- Configured firewall,
- Database calls can be made only from the specific IP addresses (website).

In Context-aware contactlist application requirements for strong passwords and regular change of password is

possible to achieve only if administrator of OpenScape system implement such policy in OpenScape panel (password for application and OpenScape is the same).

Application is immune to the most common SQL- injection and Cross Site Scripting (XSS) attacks.

IV. MEASUREMENTS

A. Performance tests result

In order to verify the SQL database structure presented in chapter III, some performance tests had been run. The proposed database scheme was compared with a classical database structure based on 5 independent tables (user, *gsmlocationcontext*, *openscapeaggmediacontext*, *openscapestatuscontext*, *m2mcontext*) and filled with context information.

The first test presents time needed to load all the context datasets to the memory. In order to get all the information about a specific user, 4 SELECT statements were executed, whereas getting all the possible information in the presented solution required only one SELECT statement. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. SQL query response time (4 context sources)

Select all context			
Context-aware contactlist database		Standard context database	
Table length [bytes]	SELECT duration [s]	Table length [bytes]	SELECT duration [s]
500	0,00501125	500	0,047842
1000	0,0101115	1000	0,055079
1500	0,01409725	1500	0,206002
2000	0,0230885	2000	0,179314
2500	0,02743775	2500	0,275252

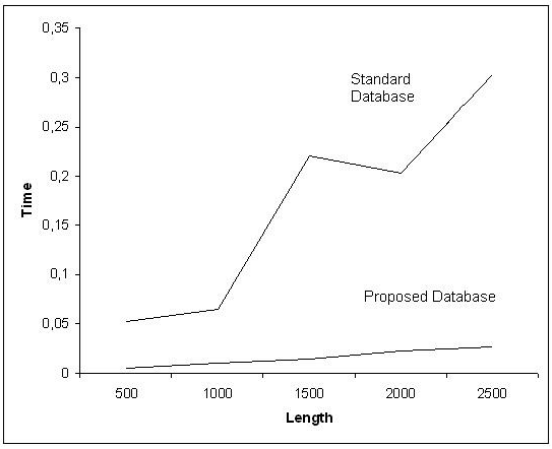

Fig. 6. SQL query response time. (4 context sources)

Table 2. SQL query executed for the proposed DB scheme (4 context sources)

```
SELECT * from contextdata where user_id =1
```

Table 3 SQL query executed based on standard solution. (4 context sources)

```
SELECT * from gsmlocation where user_id=1; SELECT * from openscapestatus where user_id=1; SELECT * from openscapeaggmediastatus where user_id=1; SELECT * from m2mcontext where user_id=1
```

The results presented above show dependency of the execution time on the table length. The proposed database structure is more efficient because it decreases the number of SQL Select statements. The execution of one SELECT statement is faster than the execution of four SQL Select statements.

In the next test, the performance of a database based on the information from only one context source was measured. The SQL queries used during the test are presented in Tables 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 4. SQL query executed for the proposed DB scheme (1 context source)

```
SELECT * from contextdata where user_id =1 and cotnexttype=1
```

Table 5.SQL query executed for the standard solution (1 context source)

```
SELECT * from gsmlocation where user_id=1
```

The results of the measurement are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. SQL query execution time (1 context data source)

Select one context			
Context-aware contact list database		Standard context database	
Table length [bytes]	SELECT duration [s]	Table length [bytes]	SELECT duration [s]
500	0,011354	500	0,019467
1000	0,020775	1000	0,02147375
1500	0,02485975	1500	0,04349075
2000	0,0322245	2000	0,05073
2500	0,04947975	2500	0,05930075

Using the proposed context notation in the JSON format results in the execution time of SQL SELECT function being shorter than in the case of the standard notation. It must be pointed out that in the presented solution, the table always has 4 columns and this value is independent from the number of parameters represented in the context information (context data source).

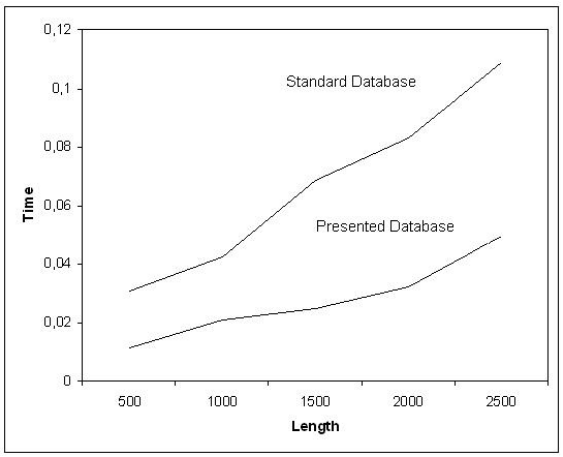

Fig. 7. SQL query response time. (1 context data source)

B. Functionality test results

Figures 8 and 9 present the results of functionality tests. The maps present the location of selected points where the service was inoked, and show the location received using the Telco 2.0 location API as well as the potential location based on the user's activities in the UC system.

Blue arrow - real location of the user.

Green arrow - location based on the information from UC system.

Red arrow - location based on the mobile network.

For the presentation of the test results, Google maps application was employed. Figure 8 shows the case in which the user forgot to change his or her UC status, and left the office. Based on the mobile terminal location services, the presented context aware system can, in this case, change the status of the user in the UC system automatically. Figure 9 presents the approximate range within which the user is considered to be in his or her office. When the user passes the border line highlighted in green, he or she can be recognized by the context application as being out of office.

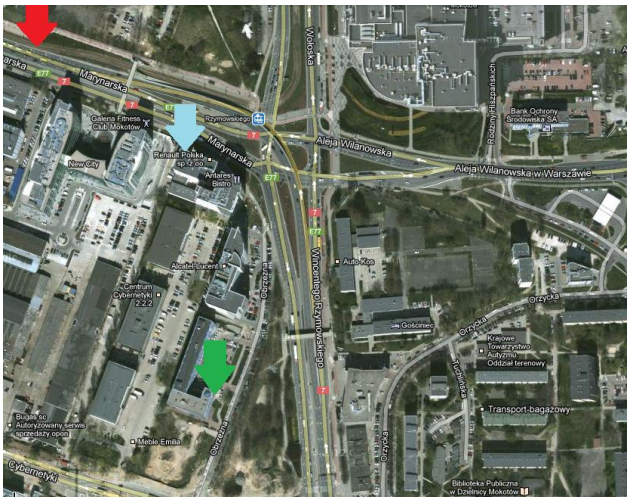

Fig. 8. Sample result – "user out of office"

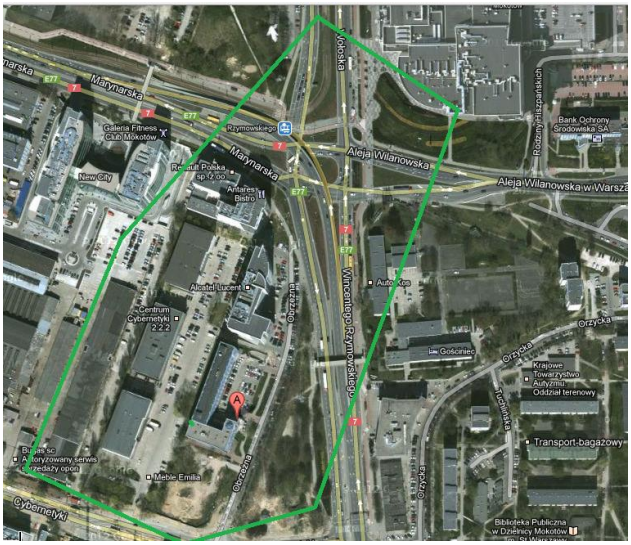

Fig. 9. "user in the office area " - approximate range

V. SUMMARY

The architecture of the context aware application presented in this paper is characterized by an easy access to the context data sets stored in the database. The context information is stored using the JSON format, which is very popular in the IT world.

The main challenge was development of the structure of the database which had to meet many criteria described in the system architecture (chapter II). Further work on the described system should be focused on the usage of NoSQL databases as data repository.

The presented solution is, first of all, flexible, ready and easy to extend. The most important aspect is the possibility to add another source of context just by inserting a record into the database with a new context data definition.

The functionality test results presented in chapter IV show the location error in mobile networks using Terminal Location API and their impact on the context aware application functionality. This error can be minimized using more accurate location algorithms by communication service providers or the implementation of other location methods e.g. based on GPS.

The prototype of the context aware application has been developed under the Orange Labs Open Middleware 2.0 Community program [22] as a part of Grzegorz Siewruk' B.Sc. Thesis.

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