FUPOL: an Integrated Approach to Participative Policies

Giorgio Prister

Major Cities of Europe, Via del Casaletto 201, Roma, 00151, Italy,
giorgio.prister@majorcities.eu

Abstract. The FUPOL project develops a model and system for a new comprehensive governance model to support the openness of the policy design and implementation lifecycle. The citizens are involved in each step of the policy design process and informed about the impact of envisaged decisions. The new governance model builds on new IT technologies, on existing know-how and open government data to create better policies and factual decisions based on citizens' needs and expectations.

Keywords: policy, participation, governance, open data, modelling, simulation, semantic analysis

Overview

Smart Cities advocate for a new type of city that is a people centred city, one that is capable of integrating all aspects of prosperity, that provides productivity, infrastructures, services, economic development, quality of life, equity, social inclusion and environmental sustainability[1]. Leaders of a prosperous cities decide policy priorities in transparent mode and with the active participation of citizens. The objective of the FUPOL project – FUture POLicies - (www.fupol.eu) is to introduce a new governance model to support the openness of the policy design and implementation lifecycle supported by innovative IT solutions. It enhances the capabilities of the constituents and policy makers to take batter decisions and to reduce uncertainties related to the potential impact of policy measures and to the reaction of the citizens.

The FUPOL governance model builds on new technologies as well as existing know-how and open government data. The approach being developed seeks the active involvement of all stakeholders including policy makers, civil servants, citizens local organisations and companies in the policy making process.

The transparency of the policy design process is enabled by multichannel social computing, policy topic sensing and extraction, multilingual semantic analysis, modelling with dynamic agent based simulation, cloud computing, Idea Management System and GIS presentation technologies. Those elements integrated with classic participation form the FUPOL system to facilitate e-governance.

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[1] UN HABITAT – State of the world's cities 2012/2013 - Prosperity of Cities

The typical policy making lifecycle approach developed in FUPOL is an iterative step by step process including:
- Automatic "Hot Topic" Sensing from social media, blogs, forums..,
- Topic extraction from the raw text data,
- Analysis and visualization comparing with previous results to show shifting of political "hot-topics",
- Open deliberation supported by the Idea Management System,
- Opinion Semantic Analysis and aggregation,
- Opinion Summarisation giving the overall sentiment,
- Simulation of policy scenarios,
- Visualization of the results,
- Publication of the results,
- Reiteration or Finalisation of the Policy design

The FUPOL project has duration of 4 years (October 2011 – September 2015) and a budget of 9,1 M€. It is an Integrated Program (IP) under objective 5.6. in the 7th call FP7 programme. The FUPOL consortium consists of 18 partners including research partners, IT-industry, local governments and cluster government organizations.

These are the key expected specific deliverables and outcomes of FUPOL:
- A new governance model to engage all stakeholders
- Multilingual training and accompanying material
- A cloud computing based ICT solution for scale take-up and acceptance.
- A comprehensive urban policy knowledge database
- Piloting and evaluation of FUPOL in Europe (Croatia, Cyprus, Macedonia, UK), China (Yantai) and Kenya (Mtwapa)
- Large scale dissemination and exploitation of results through clusters of European cities

The project is now at the end of its second year of development and is progressing as planned. The project activities started with the identification of priorities in policy domains in all pilot sites. The priorities have been evaluated by considering exemplar scenarios which have lead to the identification of tangible needs by many actors involved at pilot sites. The features of the FUPOL integrated platform have been identified and already developed.

The methodology that has been used to collect "users' needs" is based on agile analysis and programming techniques. The development of the FUPOL platform has not started from scratch. Contacts and cooperation agreements have been established with other research groups working on the same problem areas for example the UN Habitat project (www.unhabitat.org). The first FUPOL platform version and the first basic components of the platform have been released and are being utilised at the pilot sites. The pilot cities have identified the topics selected as local priorities in policy making and have already started real life pilots.

These are some of the policy examples for pilot experimentations:
a) Zagreb pilot, Croatia – Urban Infrastructure for Social inclusion; b) Yantai pilot, China – Urban Economic Policy; c) Barnsley pilot, U.K. – New development areas for Employment; d) Pegeia pilot, Cyprus – Sustainable Tourism; e) Skopje pilot, Macedonia – Urban Intermodal Traffic; f) Mtwapa pilot, Kenya – Slum Upgrading