



Data Driven Policy Cluster

Co-creating digital tools for better governance

Co-Creation and Stakeholder Engagement for Evidence Based Policymaking

Data Driven Policy Cluster
Joint Policy Brief

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Executive summary

We live in a digital world where shopping, working and even meeting our friends and partners are online but, despite the wealth of digital tools at our fingertips, participation in democratic processes is falling across Europe.

The "Stakeholder Engagement Track" of the Evidence Based Policymaking in Europe Summit 2021 explored how new technologies and tools can be used for engagement and innovative collaboration between policy makers and citizens creating ecosystems for a positive change.

It demonstrated that in the case of Stakeholder Engagement and the Co-Creation process, the biggest challenge is cultural and not technical.

To overcome this challenge it is important to be open, trying to adapt the process to what is needed from the citizens' point of view, to be ready to listen and to keep the process fluid, not forcing it into a specific direction.

Finally, capacity building is a pillar of the process. Traditional training is not working so it is time to start testing role play training or serious gaming to target this objective.

Stakeholder Engagement for evidence based policy making



Evidence Based Policymaking 2021

Session: Evidence Based Policy Cases from data to decision making

Track 1 - Stakeholder Engagement

Join us:
10th December 11:30 am CET



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Innovative Tools for Evidence Based Policy - from digital disruption to digital adoption

The convergence of Cloud, Big Data and AI has already caused considerable transformation across Government. With citizens demanding better experiences as their expectations shift towards quick, seamless and personalised services, now is the time for Public Sector decision makers to embrace digital disruption and new innovative technologies to make more sustainable policy based on real-time information, predicted impact and citizen input.

Track Stakeholder Engagement: A new era of collaboration, co-creation & consultation with citizens & stakeholders

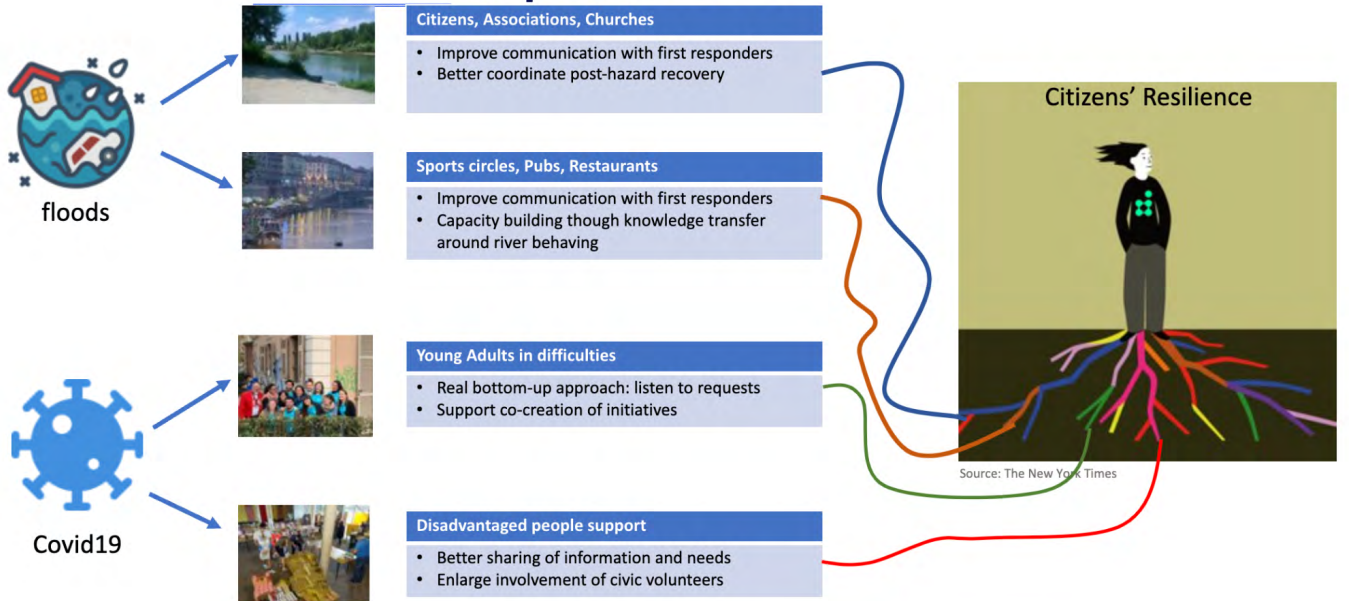
We live in a digital world where shopping, working and even meeting our friends and partners are online but despite the wealth of digital tools at our fingertips, participation in democratic processes is falling across Europe. This may be because so far Governments have just digitised what we already do offline (e.g. e-petitions, e-consultation etc.) whereas new technologies and data open up much more exciting possibilities for collaboration, co-creation and consultation with citizens.

Co-creation policies are meant to be implemented together with stakeholders at different levels. At the light of the era we are living in, the impact of digital technology and the large amount of information and data available could be very high, but need to be better addressed to allow a real and effective evidence based policy.

This track explores how new technologies and tools can be used for engagement and innovative collaboration between policy makers and citizens creating ecosystems for a positive change.

Three pillars for an innovative engagement going to be experimented in the Turin pilot. **Citizens engagement** done starting from the field, introducing them to a **Simplified Policy lifecycle** management methodology with the support of **EOSC services** for privacy issues, content management and other cloud services. The final goal is to improve trustability and resilience capacity of citizens through evidence verified improved policies.

Citizens expectations



To achieve that DECIDO is prioritising data usability against their simple availability, is proposing a co-creation pathway based on listening by experts against teaching, is supporting fluidity in processes to adapt them to citizens needs and definitely a close touch with citizens to better understand priorities.

AI4PublicPolicy project aims to promote a joint effort of policymakers and Cloud/AI experts to unveil AI's potential for automated, transparent and citizen-centric development of public policies, so the stakeholders (citizens and businesses) engagement is one of the main pillars of the project.

To this end the project is implemented using a co-creation methodology and a participatory design approach that will involve all relevant stakeholders. This will ensure the citizen-centric nature of the VPME and the development of proper resources for digital transformation of public authorities and other policy making stakeholders

From a technical point of view the AI4PublicPolicy platform will be an Open Virtualized Policy Management Environment (VPME) that will provide fully-fledged policy development / management functionalities based on AI technologies with emphasis on citizen-centric development and optimization through the realisation of citizen-oriented feedback loops.

The VPME will provide public interfaces that will enable interaction with the citizen and tools for analysing the citizens' interests, needs and feedback, allowing them to realise and declare their view in the policy co-creation process.

Moreover it will enable simulation modelling based on a detailed understanding of aetiology and evidence-based estimates of the impact of policies under development, providing a mechanism for "virtual evaluation" of policy alternatives in order to determine which policy responses would achieve the greatest impact. These responses will be obtained by local actors (i.e. citizens and businesses) both through explicit feedback, including the public authorities' applications, online surveys, etc., as well as implicit feedback obtained by other sources (e.g. social media). The responses will be analysed towards prioritising the areas for improvement – as reflected in the corresponding policies KPIs / parameters.

Different public interfaces will be supported in line with the needs of the different public administrations, including mobile apps, chatbots, as well as interfaces to discussion forums and social media. The VPME will provide the means for collecting information from these channels/interfaces.

What is more, the VPME will provide a policies interpretation framework based on XAI techniques which will include functionalities for visualising policy explanations in a user-friendly way. Since the receipt of the successful explanations is ultimately the stakeholders (i.e. citizens and businesses), this tool will include a module for collecting policy makers' input, by enquiring them the right questions in the right way, thus constructing effective and targeted policy explanations.

Finally in selected cases (e.g., in the scope of the project's pilots) the project will also provide incentives for citizens' participation in the process.

When it comes to Local Digital Twins (LDTs), stakeholder engagement has a role to play during solution development and its subsequent deployment. At the development stage, stakeholder input is needed to ensure that a LDT meets the needs of its primary user group, which is usually policy makers. They must articulate their needs to the technical team, specifying what exactly they want to do and see using a LDT.

Some cities will have climate-neutrality high on political agenda, so for them use cases that focus on trends in and simulations of energy consumption and carbon emissions from traffic, built environment, land use, industrial processes, and so on, would be a priority.

Other cities might see LDTs more as a decision support tool for emergency response, therefore prioritising real-time monitoring of water levels and the need for multi-model simulations involving waterways, urban transport, pedestrian flows and buildings. Whatever the use case, the involvement of end users in the solution design over a series of testing and development cycles helps prevent a LDT becoming yet another data platform that is capable of producing great visuals but, in reality, is hardly ever used to solve real-life policy challenges.

Once a LDT becomes operational, stakeholder participation can move up a gear, but only in certain cases. This largely depends on the nature of a LDT. Some LDTs are closed solutions used solely by governments. Some are open and it is this type of 'network oriented' LDTs that extend the traditional user base beyond policy makers.

DUET's platform, for example, can be accessed by anyone to see the impact of road closures on traffic and pollution in nearby streets (Pilsen), to find green routes for recreation and walking (Athens), or to understand how pollution levels, both air and noise, change according to traffic volumes (Ghent). Other cities that opted for a network oriented solution allow companies to improve their service offering based on climate data provided through the platform (Helsinki). And in Rotterdam the ambition is to allow citizens to design urban spaces in a digital twin environment and then see the proposed changes in real life using an Augmented Reality app.

What all these examples show is that stakeholder engagement in the context of network oriented LDTs allows wider groups of urban stakeholders to become part of the vibrant smart city ecosystem. Thanks to this LDT type, rather than being on the receiving end of policy decisions, citizens can have a much greater influence over policy processes.

As they review, tweak and propose alternatives to original plans using a LDT, not only does this help improve public policies, the actual link between government and civil society becomes stronger as a result, leading to better governance and democratic outcomes for everyone.



Policy Cloud

Cloud for Data-Driven Policy Management

The Policy Cloud project will improve the modelling, creation and implementation of public policy, delivering an integrated environment of curated datasets, and data management, manipulation, and analysis tools. Policy Cloud runs four pilot use cases in four different EU countries, covering different fields and serving as demonstrators for data-driven policy management.

The models and tools developed in these different contexts and sectors will be applied in heterogeneous environments and settings, demonstrating their reusability via a co-creative process. Co-creation is defined as the participation of users in the process of developing a product or a service. The core principle of the co-creation is engaging people to create valuable experiences together. A central element of the transition to co-creation is the ability to effectively develop and manage two-way communication.

Design Thinking (DT) is a term coined and popularised by David Kelley¹. Briefly, it brings forward and systematises the mindset and ecosystem in which designers think and develop their ideas. DT deploys the typical design setting for iteratively prototyping ideas. In a workshop setting that is inspired by the DT process, ideation and experimentation aims at generating as many ideas as possible in a short time, making a selection of ideas that are further developed and tested through quick prototyping. In a workshop setting, this may be simulated by forming groups and swapping ideas between them. Groups may rotate between ideas as an attempt to liberate the participants from their first favourite ideas, making the process more open-ended. At the end of the workshop, all groups present their outcomes and the generated ideas are discussed in each table. The workshop ends by sharing insights of different tables with the rest of the participants and reflecting on the results from all tables.

Policy Cloud Pilot partners have chosen the DT methodology to help them to reach the goal of co-creation and that would be a good fit for the intended audience. DT is co-creative and iterative by nature. It is about changing and improving, now and in the future. It is key to understand the starting point of innovation (current situation), the preferred situation (vision) and the way to get there. This is needed to make a change and start with smaller steps that lead towards the end goal. DT puts people and their context at the centre. Experiences are influenced by the social, physical and cultural context. Insight in the daily context of those involved enables the creation of solutions that meet people's needs and wishes. The process is iterative. Small interventions make things tangible and enable reasoning towards the unknown. Stakeholders are actively involved in the different steps through co-creation. Design tools are applied to visualise insights and create common ground.

DT is about approaching things differently with a strong user orientation and fast iterations with multidisciplinary teams to solve complex problems. It is equally applicable to (re)designing products, services, processes, business models, and ecosystems. It inspires radical innovation as a matter of course, and ignites capabilities beyond mere potential.

In the Lombardy and Aragon region, many stakeholders and policy makers are already familiar with the concept of DT, so the choice to use DT as their method was quite obvious. Instead of starting at the beginning, more time could be spent in exploring the possibilities of policies and finding concrete applications.

1. [4] Kelley T., Kelley, D. (2013) Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All. Currency.

The IntelComp Project will build a cloud platform that will offer text mining tools for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy, ensuring policies are created “with” people and not just “for” people. With that aim, IntelComp adopts a Living Labs methodology, embracing a two-fold co-creation approach with citizens:

- to co-design and co-create an IntelComp tool for citizens (the Citizen Viewer), jointly revising user requirements and improving the developed tool in an iterative manner to make the results easy to use and actionable to the users.
- to refine and validate this cutting-edge tool through the co-creation of policies with citizens via participatory processes in three different domains: Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change/Energy and Health/Cancer.

This new tool, the Citizen Viewer of the STI Participation Portal, will then be used for an innovative collaboration between policy makers and citizens. With this tool, citizens and citizen associations (foundations, associations of patients, etc.) will analyse the STI landscape (scientific topics and technological fields) in the three domains. Then, policy makers will consult citizens and citizen associations using this tool to gather relevant input regarding social needs and priorities for STI policy. As a result, policy makers will address policy questions in a participatory way with an innovative tool, by connecting scientific topics and technological fields with social needs

Challenges to overcome

It's not a matter of technology.

This track highlighted that, in the case of Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Creation processes, the biggest challenge is cultural and not technical.

There are many different types of attitudes from citizens. We have people who are aiming to participate and so they are self motivated because of their culture, because they already are socially engaged. On the other hand, there are citizens who are more inclined towards independent actions, and are not so motivated to be part of the community. Often people have a high level in terms of culture but are not so open to engagement and to relationships, confrontation and discussion with other people.

Moreover, one of the clear takeaways of the track was that trust is based on presence: project teams should stay in touch with citizens and listen to them, as well as have “fluidity” in co-creation. On the other hand, data driven tools are needed to address urban challenges.

The digital twin initiative is one way to facilitate co-creation and stakeholder engagement, but the challenge in the next few years is to put it in the real world and make it so that all these techniques will help us to really improve not only cooperation but also the way we lead.

Another challenge is understanding the STI policy making via the development of a co-designed framework with stakeholders, e.g. citizens. In addition, it is necessary to create a Data Space of STI related data sources and an AI-assisted multilingual policy modelling platform comprising developed models.



Recommendations

How could this cultural challenge be overcome?

First, be open and try to adapt to what is needed from the citizens' point of view. For example there is a big difference between data availability versus their usability. What we learn in the early stage of projects is that often we have data but they're not usable. It's not easy to collect them to be used by citizens in co-creation, though the real challenge is to make the data usable through a very intuitive interface, otherwise they can only be used by professionals, which is useless for co-creation.

Second, we should be ready to listen. Very often we present ourselves to the pilot site and to citizens as "the experts," but that is not the case. If we really want co-creation to work, we have to open our ears and listen to what they want, not forcing them to do something they are not used to.

The term that we can use for this is "fluidity". This concept is something very new for us and means that we don't have to go to the table with a structured way to approach the issue. We call that fluidity because it's not only about adapting our attitude, but it's also about keeping the process fluid and not forcing it into a specific direction even if in our opinion it is a good one.

The third point is trust. If we want to receive the engagement level that we need, we should stay in touch. We cannot organise one meeting and then disappear for two months and then call for another meeting. This is not working and we have to find a way to keep this relationship open.

Finally, capacity building is a pillar of the co-creation process. Traditional training is not working. We need to use role play training or serious gaming. The policy implementation is an opportunity to test these options. To do so, we need to be supported by technology, but it is even more important to understand how to talk with the stakeholders and how to reward them, in order to have the best engagement.



**Data Driven
Policy Cluster**

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