Introduction

Theories underlying community policing received new impetus with the recent advent of smartphones and social media and especially, user-generated content (UGC) where citizens engage in closer interaction with their local community and law enforcement agency (LEA). The years 2010-2014 have shown a rapid upsurge of smartphone apps aimed at improving crime reporting and other forms of UGC and interaction associated with community policing. In order to take good advantage of these ICT innovations, CITYCoP is set out to determine how the needs of citizens and LEAs could be met in a smart way using these interactive technologies, and at the same time enhance crime reporting, law enforcement and respect for privacy.

Motivation

In recent years, the contact between LEAs and citizen has decreased continuously. In most cases, this interaction only takes place in specific and relevant situations. But to achieve a high level of public safety and crime prevention, it is important for community policing to be as wide reaching as possible, and one way this goal could be achieved is by using widely available interactive technologies already in citizens’ possession. The wide spread use of smartphones, social media and mobile applications could leverage this task, and there is a great potential that if it is simple, it will be an effective way of reaching a wide audience.

Therefore, the project’s approach to community policing is to bring the interaction between citizen and LEAs on a digital level. This task will include on the first level, to determine the needs of citizens and LEAs in order to define the content and scope of the needed application, and to map out possible functions to be incorporated in the application such as crime reporting function, a messaging service or a public forum to discuss problems between the LEAs or other citizens. In the end, a test run of the tool in different cities will be conducted and feedback will be analysed to improve the application. However, as the application will potentially process a lot of personal data, it is important to ensure a high data security and transparency on the other level. Thus, in order to raise citizen’s confidence, compliance with privacy and data protection laws should be an integral part of the application. In this respect, L3S is responsible for the development and implementation of a data protection audit and will also act as a “watchdog” for a strong data protection when developing and using the tool.

Challenges & Highlights

The main challenges and highlights for the project are how to leverage already existing interactive technologies and make citizen’s use them in a way that enhances public safety and interaction with LEA. How to gain the citizen’s trust for this purpose is paramount as well as how to implement the technical and administrative requirements for pilot runs of the application in different EU Member States’ cities. Furthermore, for its successful deployment, there is the need to strike a balance between strong data protection requirements and individual interests for the different LEAs when setting up data protection policy for the application.

Project abstract:

CITYCoP is a Horizon 2020 funded project aimed at developing a common EU application for mobile phones to raise communications and other interactions between citizen and Law Enforcement Agencies. The project will harness citizen’s interactive technologies such as smartphones, social media and mobile applications in the area of community policing, while at the same time respect citizens’ privacy and data protection rights.
Members:
forgo
hawellek
knoke
stoklas
wendt

Project manager:
Kai Wendt

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