

From here to where: Succeed in the post-Covid transformation

Day One overview

Moderator of the morning: Stefanie Dreyer – Journalist

Chair of the morning: Paolo Boscolo - CIO of the City of Prato



The Beginning of the first day of the conference is, by tradition, deputed to present the innovation actions put in place by the hosting city and the related higher level of public authorities (Province, Region, Government, etc.). So, after the welcome message from the Larissa's Lord Mayor, confirming the strong commitment of the city in promoting innovation through digitization, we had the opportunity to know the Greek strategy for the digital transformation of the country by the voice of Prof. Dimosthenis Anagnostopoulos (General Secretary of Information Systems for Public Administration / Ministry).

Then the following session included three different kind of speeches:

- a) some practical experiences, best practices or innovative approaches adopted by single cities.
- b) some interesting initiatives, by different kind of entities (Regional government, IT consortia, etc.), to provide tools to make easier or more effective innovation in groups of cities.
- c) some reflections about hot topics/questions that effect and influence digital transformation processes in cities.

As first experience we heard **Prof. Robin Hambleton** (Emeritus Professor of City Leadership, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK). He illustrated an innovative methodology and approach to leverage City Leadership in digital transformation deployed in Bristol (UK). The methodology is based on "place-based governance" approach that considers as much as possible all factors that affect local transformation processes. The model underpinning the illustrated methodology can be summarized in a "flower diagram", representing the needed collaboration among different leaderships in a city and with a set of factors that compose the external environment. This adopted overall planning activity harmonizes all other sector specific planning efforts and is considered as a sort of "One City vision and plan" for a medium-long term period. In the speech also some practical examples of concrete actions put in place, through this innovative planning activity, in Bristol was provided (details about this plan can be found at <https://www.bristolonecity.com>).

Isabella Mader, from "Excellence Research" (Vienna), stimulated the discussion about the need, in order to manage innovation, to see public sector as a network of people creating a "movement" and no longer a management structure based on traditional hierarchical organizational models. To stress the need to recover a "real world" interaction, especially after the pandemic period that obliged us to live in a "virtual world", she was provocative imagining to ask questions about how the new world will be to a Bot like

Alexa, Siri, etc...imagining the stupid/trivial or inconclusive answers we could receive. The proposed motto at the end of the presentation looks very provocative: “Let’s leave wonderland and meet real people”.

Agnese Bianchi (Head of the Smart City Unit of the Municipality of Milano) illustrated in which way the City of Milano created a digital eco system in the IT infrastructure to allow a full interoperability among different applications both inside the city administration and outside, with other institutions and private entity willing to exploit the potentials of available/shared public data. The technical infrastructure capitalise the experience made in 2015 for the Expo event where a similar ecosystem was put in place to manage the dataflows associated the worldwide event.

Gwennaëlle Costa-Le-Vallant (Director Data, Digitalisation and Smart Region – Région Ile de France) illustrated the Ile-de-France smart platform made available to all local Authorities in the region. Thanks to this platform it is easier to create smart services for citizens also for smaller local authorities in the covered area (Île-de-France). She showed how this platform contributed to create: the largest EU concentrator of territorial data, a large and evolving set of features, a community of actors involved in the creation of smart services and a digital twin of the covered region. According to the observations by Isabella Mader this experience in Ile-de-France was possible leveraging the collaboration among many actors involved in many organised sessions of collective intelligence.

Similarly, **Carlo Gambucci** (General Manager SIGI – Luxembourg) illustrated the IT shared platform created in Luxembourg to support the “digitalization journey” of the Luxembourg municipalities. SGI associates 101 municipalities, 537 nurseries and childcare institutions, 60 associations of municipalities and 30 social offices. He showed us the impressive results achieved by this “shared IT service centre”. The field of activity of SGI cover not only advanced smart city projects implementations but the full administrative processes of local authorities (back-office and front-office). The architecture and technical approach followed in the service implementation is the full integration among different application to avoid the risk of siloed data management.

Gianluca Vannuccini (Chief Information Officer and Director of IT Department – Region Tuscany) illustrated the digital ongoing transformation strategy at the Regional Government of Tuscany (Italy). The strategy is mainly concentrated on the matters for which the Region is in charge, based on the national regulations (e.g. e-Health and Digital single gateway). However the actions put in place aim to support directly or indirectly many other crucial efforts like: the full deployment of the national common infrastructure (PagoPA - e-Payments), SPID - eIDAS Digital identity), digital Justice, centralised e-Procurement, Broadband and Ultrawideband infrastructures, Regional Data lake, Cloud service for all Tuscany Public Administrations and Cybersecurity. Finally, the regional strategy is aimed to improve the digital skills of civil servants and citizens in the region. Again, the success of such initiative is based on a strong and active cooperation among a plethora of different actors: Municipalities, Universities, Associations of professionals and enterprises, trade unions and volunteers. A recent achievement was the creation of a shared Open Data / Big Data platform for data analytics available for all Tuscany local Authorities.

Ana D. Georgieva (Innovative Sofia, Sofia Municipality) introduced the topic of the afternoon workshop (organised by the EU project Policy Cloud which Sofia is a partner of) illustrating the Sofia’s Pilot Use Case: “Urban Policy Making Through Analysis of Crowdsourced Data”. Using the tools made available by the Policy Cloud project Sophia Municipality aim is to adapt its Policy design through assessment and validation of policies and initiatives, based on big data analysis related to:

- a) road infrastructure
- b) environment and air quality
- c) waste collection and waste disposal
- d) transport and parking
- e) cleanliness of public spaces
- f) violation of public order, and others, of importance to citizens.

The analysed data are also crowdsourced, coming also from the citizens using the municipality service.

At the end of the set of speeches **Robin Heilig** (City of Vienna, Digitization Public Administration, CIO Office of the City) stimulated the discussion about the readiness for local authorities personnel to face the challenges imposed by the digitization processes, in particular considering the “Crash Course” imposed by the pandemic. Surviving the pandemic was, he observed, possible:

- Working together (trans organisational and trans disciplinary)
- Being highly responsive to changes
- Acting fast implementation
- Improving solutions while walk
- Directly with and for our citizens

And the basic question now is: should we now go back to the previous situation? or should we capitalise the experience made? How? In the presentation he provided a quick view on how Vienna created with the COVID-19 experience a “blueprint” for the future digitization work.

The short round table at the end of the session offered additional elements of discussion and some clarifications about the presented matters. An interesting discussion took place on if and how to be able as Public Administration to find, select and enrol the right skills that are currently missing in our organisations. Another topic of discussion was about leadership in cities: how to develop them, how to make them collaborate. Finally which kind of involvement of citizen were experienced or should be tried in digital transformation processes.