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**EVERYBODY'S AN INNOVATOR:  
TWO YEARS OF EXPERIMENTS  
IN INNOVATING THE CITY**

The legacy of the URBACT Network Innovato-R

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by  
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**CONCLUSIONS: Didier Vancutsem, *ISOCARP Institute***



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Centre for Urban Excellence

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FINAL NETWORK RESULTS PRODUCT



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# Table of Contents

## PREFACE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Innovative thinking and design for increasing the capacity and effectiveness of the local public administration**

Uncertainty, complexity, and change. The COVID lesson

19th century institutions dealing with 21st-century challenges

Design and experimentation to accelerate learning against short term innovation (the experience of policy innovation labs and some practices)

Next generation policymaking innovation: between hyper-local and global alliances

### **The power of collaborative communities and informal networks as new interlocutors for a shared public action**

From the enablement paradigm to handing over ownership

From the co-production bubble to Community knowledge, ownership & management

Care, knowledge, and digital innovation

### **Lessons learned from the network: ambitions, capabilities, processes, methodologies, tools and first results**

The origins: overview on InnovaTO project

Innovato-R project: objectives, partnership, structure and

Transferability: methodology, phases and outputs

The experience and impact in partner cities

## **TURIN**

*PILOT: leveraging the good practice transfer to power up political support*

## **CLUJ-NAPOCA**

*PILOT - Using digital tools to storm the innovative potential of public employees*

## **METROPOLE DU GRAND PARIS**

*PILOT - Digital Builder Program: how to create a community of local civil servants to develop new services*

## **ROTTERDAM**

*PILOT: a digital platform for creative communities*

## **MURCIA**

*PILOT - programme for in house innovation and improvement*

## **VEZPREM**

*PILOT - Three key areas of innovation, with a special focus on culture*

## **PORTO**

*PILOT - the "Switzerland" Room, a neutral physical space to jointly analyze challenges at work*

**A look at the public administration to come:  
from the hierarchical chain of command to the paradigm  
of the transversal network-based governance**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**About Innovative Thinking and Design, and the urgent  
Need to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the  
local public administration**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

# PREFACE

*by Fabrizio Barbiero & Michele Fatibene, City of Turin*

Like other cities, Torino is facing new societal challenges having an enormous potential as innovation “activators” because of the strong intense concentration of competencies, high-educated people, resources, and networks in the city. Therefore, the local administration has been trying to contribute to the development of our local social innovation ecosystem by entering into the innovation value chain as an enabling and facilitating actor, provided that it can enter into a dialogue with the other players in the ecosystem and be a proactive player itself.

In 2016 Torino was awarded as the second European Capital of Innovation thanks to its open innovation models supporting social innovation startups and creating new market opportunities for urban innovations.

Why not translate within the administration itself the concept of social innovation ecosystem? The idea of social innovation is mainly based on the idea that the different stakeholders of a territory create value because together, with their collective contribution, they can generate new ideas and solutions capable of influencing innovation processes. But if much has been investigated on how to involve citizens in innovation of the urban context, less attention has been paid to involving employees in the development of a smart city.

What about our employees, a 10.000-strong community of well-educated, skilled people?

Cities across Europe face similar challenges. One of them is how to guarantee impact with decreasing resources. Far from engaging expensive external consultancies in complex change management processes, InnovaTO’s idea was very simple: turn to the people who know best the administrative machine from inside and encourage them to come up with ideas that can be implemented at no cost, besides time, and can help the city to improve its processes and therefore increase its impact on the lives of its citizens. And this idea was born out of the action of a small group of civil servants who dared to make the



difference in their organisation. Motivation, after all, is critical when you talk about brave innovation.

The Innova.TO project engaged in 2014 the ‘city’s staff in a collaborative/co-operative “competition” – a call for ideas – to propose innovative projects that could improve the City Administration performance by reducing waste and the enhancement of resources.

In a few words, the spirit behind Innova.TO was to encourage its 10 thousand employees to see themselves as potential Innovato-R.

Building new forms of engagement in which human resources are not just used for their function as a management tool of the institution, but are instead supported, stimulated to become agents of change, promoters of innovation capable of generating well-being and development for their community is the only way to improve the efficiency and efficacy of any organization, including public bodies. Moving in an environment where it is possible to propose ideas, develop and implement them allows the employee to play a leading role in the work environment, adding creativity to the competence. At the same time, if the work organization takes on the meaning of smart community, carrying out its own activity will no longer be just a duty to be fulfilled, but an opportunity to manifest one’s skills in the hope of contributing to the construction of a new way of working in its organization.

The InnovaTO initiative has been recognized as a best practice at the European level. It has merged into the European project “Innovato-R” (2018-2021), thanks to the Urbact Transfer Network Program, which sees the City of Turin as the lead partner to transfer the practice of the “InnovaTO” initiative to other six European administrations: Cluj-Napoca, Métropole du Grand Paris, Murcia, Porto, Rotterdam, Veszprém.

For a full success of the Transfer Network aims, each of the partners involved has implemented a practical execution of the acquired methodology, according to the available tools and adapting it to their own context.

The way URBACT transfer networks work is that cities have cooperated not just in the mere transfer of best practices but in jointly making it better and more robust. And we can proudly say that, in some cases, the transfer has worked so well that what has been implemented is significantly better than the original version, not to mention the fact that in some cities the InnovaTO model has been adopted with a clear strategy to leverage it as core action of HR policy.

For this reason, we welcome the publication of this paper, as it builds on the experience of innnovaTO and innovato-R to draw some lessons on what it means today to innovate in our local administrations, and what kind of organisational arrangements and tools can facilitate the emergence of innovation to improve resilience and quality of living in our cities.



# INTRODUCTION

## Innovative thinking and design for increasing the capacity and effectiveness of the local public administration

### Uncertainty, complexity, and change. The COVID lesson

*«What the world will become already exists in fragments and pieces, experiments and possibilities»*

Ruth Wilson Gilmore's<sup>1</sup> words, born inside the American abolitionist movement, gain a renewed and amplified relevance while Europe is slowly locking down its cities for the second time because of Covid-19.

The pandemic has dramatically accelerated our communities' inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been dismissed and neglected for decades: while many voices dread the end of the urban era and the modern paradigm of life as we know it, we are progressively opening our eyes in front of an uncomfortable reality. We live in a world characterised by increasing complexity and definitively structured around global scale interactions and interdependencies.

We are directly starting to experience how social and economic issues can rapidly increase in scale and are intrinsically interconnected; we are facing trade-offs among health, financial security, social justice, and environmental action that, until recently, would have been inconceivable. The regional and local impact of the Covid-19 crisis is highly heterogeneous, with a strong territorial dimension and significant implications for crisis management and policy responses<sup>2</sup>; rapid solutions to emergencies will not be enough without ac-

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1. Director of the Centre for Place, Culture, and Politics and professor of geography in Earth and Environmental Sciences at The City University of New York

2. OCECD (2020), The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government [online]; Available here: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128\\_128287-5agkkojaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128_128287-5agkkojaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government)

knowledging that we need to imagine new models that can bring economic and social benefits through innovation.

Local public administrations are in the frontline of this grand challenge. Despite fear and unpreparedness are palpable, **Covid-19 has undeniably accelerated the shift towards a new phase of policy and government innovation:** no one knows the legacy we will be left with after the pandemic will be over. Still, it is time for the State to strike back. PAs have the unique chance to transform innovative recovery strategies and bottom-up emergency initiatives into long term policies to reimagine themselves, their services, and how they collaborate with citizens.

The issues and scenarios addressed by the Innovato-R project, such as being able to expand the decision-making spectrum within the offices of the public administration to achieve more sustainable results, assume even greater importance in the face of this emergency that we all have to face globally.

This emergency made no difference between work organization in the public or private sector, which has transversally affected the workspaces and the ways of interacting in one and the other.

The emergency, the profound state of crisis, has accelerated those innovative aspects, which already existed, but were relegated to having a complementary and not a main role. In other words, innovation struggles to advance in the conditions of “normality” but finds the space to progress when the effects of a sudden change are evident that jeopardize our safety and change our references’ function and orientations, changing the texture of our certainties.

Above all, the occurrence of a significant crisis, such as the pandemic, helps to derive between what is needed, is functional to the achievement of objectives, and what is redundant or should be innovated, changed: in a more or less coordinated way, this happened in public administrations.

The following examples demonstrate how the emergency brings to light a flexible and creative thinking, such as that promoted in the experience of innovato-R, and how this thinking can facilitate both the life of those who provide and those who use the services:

- the simplification of procedures, through the **use of digital technology** and the decentralization of offices;
- the provision that for the emergency period, **smart working constitutes the ordinary** way of carrying out the work performed by public administrations;

- **simplification measures for administrative procedures** initiated with the emergency, in particular, those relating to economic benefits: extension of the validity of permits, authorizations, and concessions;
- the right to carrying out **videoconferences for local authorities and public bodies**.

The meaning of this simplification cannot be limited to the context of the organization of work within public administrations, but also embraces the re-design of tax policies and their support structures, the reform of teaching, in short, a structural simplification that goes beyond the competencies of Innovato-R.

The sense and the contribution of Innovato-R lie precisely in understanding how this simplification can be achieved in public administrations by working on experimentation processes based on innovative practices.

The pandemic reminds us that things can be done differently in a simpler, more effective and efficient way if we want.

*Will we be able to maintain and structure what we are learning? What public innovation practically looks like when 19th-century institutions need to face 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges?*

Marchel Koops, CCO of Athlon International, stated that the pandemic is not a game-changer: “The industry was transitioning anyway, but the pandemic is an accelerator.”<sup>3</sup>

This concept can be translated within the public administration. Specifically, in those public administrations that are gearing up to improve, as starting points:

- the path of the decision-making process and its transparency
- the enhancement of internal skills
- the correspondence of the services provided to the needs of citizens
- efficiency in providing the services provided
- the degree of innovation of services and work organization.

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3. Fleet Europe Summit Day 1: “Pandemic isn’t a game-changer, it’s an accelerator”

Undoubtedly, the partners of the innovato-R project share this strong spirit of change of the public machine. Their path in recent months has led to results from which it is possible to learn and define learning transferable to other administrations willing to change.

Creative action a theoretical provision for a change of direction in public management is a necessary means to keep up with the times in a society that grows through the value of its intellectual capital. A contemporaneity, which is the knowledge society, especially for many European cities, which is based on the sharing of information and is implemented through the integration of shared and often non-proprietary assets (Rifkin) and consequently is based on shared economies. In this productive and relational context, the governance of the public administration cannot continue to be conceived as a local branch of a political and administrative will located at a central level, also because this political will, if it were structured in an organic political process, no longer has full control of the global logic in which the cities themselves are completely immersed. The hierarchy from central to local is a dangerous cultural legacy of a deterministic bureaucracy that could have made sense in a pre-industrial or Fordist non-productive system, but which loses all its validity in the contemporary productive, social, economic and cultural context. As Sassen (2010) stated: *“The globalization of economic activity brings with it a new type of organizational structure. Grasping it theoretically and empirically requires a new type of conceptual architecture of which important elements are constructs such as global cities and global city-regions”*. The government of a city that wants to remain competitive and offer its citizens good quality of life must rethink continuously how to maximize the collective intelligence inherent in its administrative structure. Thinking management models to be able to respond to current needs and not continue to structure their actions by re-proposing models of government-linked to an industrial society that no longer exists in most European cities: new governance architectures have to be designed by cities to keep competitive and provide high quality services to residents.

## **19th century institutions dealing with 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges**

With technology, social, climate effects raging crosswise in our economies and societies, the demand for concrete answers and quick fixes fill local administrators' desks and minds, making too risky and controversial questioning fun-

damental assumptions, embracing experimental practices. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the propensity to design policy for narrow silos relating to particular policy areas and government departments, without adequate consideration of the interdependencies between them and the interconnected nature of local and global societies.<sup>4</sup>

The governance mechanism that activated the path of this experiment financed by URBACT stems, as stated before, from a previous small experiment conducted in Torino (innovaTO), which, however, constitutes a Copernican revolution in that

- it redefines the relationship between roles,
- mixes the skills cards and s
- hows how the management of and in public administration could be done differently, enhancing the capabilities of officials and stimulating their creative action.

It would be a paradox to think that one can manage a fluid society (Bauman, 2000) through mechanisms designed for the society of optimistic and limitless growth. In this sense, the project promoted by Turin was a proxy. The fact of having encountered during its implementation an difficult to foresee event (the pandemic), and the fact that all the cities involved have been able to adapt to change through innovative processes, means that flexible governance structures can be set in motion and that we can imagine a different public administration. A public administration that follows a networked governance model is widespread with more management hubs of reference, horizontal, but certainly no longer hierarchical and vertical. The linearity of command and control does not allow to bring out the intellectual capital's potential within public administrations.

However, things are changing. Active niches of innovation are growing inside public institutions, advancing the shared purpose to move beyond the obvious to develop better long-term view interventions and change the system organically. To make this vision actionable and provide a sense of focus, it is crucial to target the change pace inside our institutions.

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4. The Alan Turing Institute, Shocks and resilience. Measuring policy impact in the Covid-19 crisis and building resilience against future shocks [Online]; Available here: <https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/research-projects/shocks-and-resilience>



We need to lead the current local government model into the 21<sup>st</sup> century putting people at the core of public sector innovation. Public organisations cannot merely adopt a strategy of survival by adapting to their environment: public officials must become change agents to shape the environment around them (Mulgan, 2008).

### **Design and experimentation to accelerate learning against short term innovation (the experience of policy innovation labs and some practices)**

In the last decade, we have seen an increasing number of governments committing time, human and financial resources to explore different possibilities in providing services, collaborating with citizens, facing emergencies, or simply trying to (re)imagine themselves differently. Much of this work has been done and continues to roll around the world, thanks to public and social innovation labs: teams, units, and funds dedicated to structuring and embedding innovation methods and practice in government to tackle social and public problems (Puttick, Baeck, Colligan, 2014).

The term social ‘innovation lab’ is used to characterise various organisational forms and methods. It includes organisations such as centers for social innovation, design labs, change labs, public innovation labs, impact labs, impact incubators, impact learning labs, collective impact learning labs, and more (Papageorgiou, 2017).

When discussing about increasing the capacity and effectiveness of the local public administration, PSI (Public Sector Innovation) Labs get the place of honour because of their ability to make physical and mental space to allow innovation to happen: they are deeply rooted on design, open innovation, cross-sector collaboration and the use of data to test new experimental approaches to government.

Labs are the symbols of a movement of people, citizens, and civil servants, willing to invest in the future when they are responsible for delivering the services that people rely on today (NESTA, 2019). Their purpose is to conduct lab processes as a systemically designed procedure of arranging collaboration between various stakeholders, identifying the problems and challenges to work on (Wascher, Kaletka, Schultze, 2019).

Set up and organized by very different actors such as civil society, think-tanks, and institutions, most of these laboratories are run by governments and adopt

experimental approaches to design as a more human- or user-centered (instead of problem-centered) tool to put forth a new use of “design” as a process of creativity and participation (Van Buuren, Lewis, Peters, Voorberg, 2020).

NESTA clusters<sup>5</sup> four main areas labs focus on:

- Scanning for and identifying key issues, priorities, and tasks.
- Developing ideas that impact these areas.
- Testing and prototyping solutions.
- Creating routes into larger scale impact or systems change.

As a design-guided process to test new ideas and find out what is most effective, it is clear experimentation has a considerable role in accelerating learning by systematically testing assumptions and identifying knowledge and competences gaps. We have spent the last two decades affirming that innovating the way we do policy must have desirable effects distinct from those sought by industrial policy: most notably the discovery of knowledge (Bakhshi, Freeman, Potts, 2011).

Creating space, rising interest, and gathering people around the potential of experimentation and design to develop solutions to solve specific challenges are just the first steps of a long, sometimes discouraging, road. With Covid-19 repercussions knocking at the doors of exhausted administration and citizens, we need to become better in implementing these ideas to achieve systemic change ultimately.

We need to shift ‘practitioners’ attention to investing in portfolios of experiments that include the testing of at least some non-linear, non-obvious solutions, government officials can move beyond the automatic mode of many policy interventions and explore the “room of the non-obvious” in a safe-to-fail context (Quaggiotto, Christiansen, Leurs, 2018).

Keeping experimenting and working with high levels of uncertainty calls for the deepest cultural change we have ever advocated for. Mobilising and empowering people inside and outside administrations will be the next stage of policy innovation.

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5. NESTA (2019), 20 Tools for innovating in government [Online]; Available here: [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/20\\_Tools\\_Innovating\\_Government.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/20_Tools_Innovating_Government.pdf)

## **Next generation policymaking innovation: between hyper-local and global alliances**

There are no silver bullets for the future of innovation in policymaking. Right now, we need to go beyond individual pilots, projects, and labs to do a more profound work on promoting collective intelligence, directly engaging citizens, and asking them for continuous help and feedbacks. We need to rely more on the ecosystem knowledge and expertise to keep the labs' work and legacy alive and build the next phase around developing skills and attitudes.

Some organisations are starting to dive deep into developing a competency framework for experimental problem solving to emphasise how core attitudes and characteristics, in combination with key skills and competencies, enable behaviors that increase the likelihood of successful policy innovation (Christiansen, Leurs, Duggan, 2018).

The emergence of new needs and the rapid change of our surroundings will bring us to start asking a different kinds of questions, consider alternative innovation narratives able to bring new voices to the table where experiments are discussed and decided.

# The power of collaborative communities and informal networks as new interlocutors for a shared public action

## From the enablement paradigm to handing over ownership

Bringing new voices to the table of policymaking calls for a robust investment in co-creation approaches to tackle extensive power imbalances and invest in a shared vision.

The era of the “enablement paradigm” (Snow, 2020) has come to an end: until now, governments that wanted to open to citizen participation have tried to blur their managerial and controller nature to become enablers of favorable conditions for collaboration. Whereas these approaches represent a praiseworthy effort, it demonstrates some limits in front of a growing complexity and ‘citizens’ demands to invest real resources in a community-focused governance model.

How can government fully embrace the power of communities in shaping effective public action? How can we create together a shared plan and vision?

## From the co-production bubble to Community knowledge, ownership & management

In the last decades, many governments have tested new ways to create, design, and deliver public services. Brandsen and Honingh (2015) proposed the following definition of co-production as: “a relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the work of the organization”. Such definition points out three main characteristics of what co-production is:

- ❶ the presence of a continuous relationship between the employees of an organization and the individual citizens (or group);

- ② the direct and active inputs and efforts of the citizens;
- ③ the citizen's voluntary engagement and the payment of the employee (Sicilia, Fugini, Bracci, 2016).

One of the most renowned examples of co-design efforts between citizens and administrations is the one promoted by the Danish public innovation lab MindLab with 'Demark's Ministry of Employment around new ways of dealing with long-term unemployment and vulnerable citizens. Using ethnographic methods to explore how employment processes worked for citizens, in job centers and in the everyday practice of frontline staff, they engage national decision-makers and local practitioners in collectively analysing insights, co-creating new ideas, and co-designing several activities to put the new reforms into practice. The project has since evolved into a strategic partnership between the ministry and MindLab where human-centred design is being applied and experimented with in other phases of the policymaking cycle (NESTA, IDEO, DESIGN FOR EUROPE, 2016).

This relationship between citizens and local public administration has proven to be a crucial resource in building mutual trust and foster the sustainability and resilience of public services over time but,

**how can it be managed to build system change inside and outside public governance institutions truly?**

The extreme emergency we are living with Covid-19 (and that we will leave again because of climate change and economic disruptions) shows us the liabilities of the co-production mechanisms, 'we've been designing and experimenting in the last decades.

Co-production is considered a form of public service management to increase effectiveness and efficacy, with stable or even reduced public resources (Sicilia, Fugini, Bracci, 2016). But when crisis strikes and public administrations are too slow to react, communities tend to respond proactively through autonomous initiatives, slipping away from the driven by a deep knowledge of their proximities and needs.

Co-production can be a transformative tool if we stop to see it as an outcome per se.

Pandemic responses have primarily involved governments telling communities what to do, seemingly with minimal community input. Yet communities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, can identify solutions: they

know what knowledge and rumors are circulating; they can provide insight into the stigma and structural barriers; and they are well placed to work with others from their communities to devise collective responses (Marston, Renedo, Miles, 2020).

The ability to overcome difficulties in the name of collective good has been at the center of the place-based initiative (Bhatia, 2020). In Canada, that is mobilising residents, organisations, institutions for systemic change. In Toronto, a community-led design initiative is redefining neighborhood revitalization in areas with relevant concentration of racial poverty. The neighborhood of Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) suffers from poor public transit, deteriorating housing, high unemployment, and racism converge to keep approximately 40% of its households in poverty. In 2008, the community organisation East Scarborough Storefront decided to invest in a cross-sectoral, community-led design initiative to revitalise a former police-station in a community facility. The project has been led by a partnership between the youth, architecture and design firms, landlords (private and public), funders, the city councillor, and city staff. Instead of the typical informative communications provided to the citizens in these kinds of situations, residents could proactively decide about the physical changes in the design of the centre.

The Storefront initiative shifted the power dynamics towards citizens to make sure the project would reflect the community's to make sure the project would reflect the community's aspirations and the possibility to attract further resources and investments.

The importance of working closely with local communities is widely recognized by now. However, we need to go beyond ensuring that new policies are tailored to local needs and preserve the integrity and autonomy, the peculiar and unique approach, of a new and influential actor in the public action scene. Researchers and practitioners in the field of social and government innovation have consistently urged for a public administration able to "tap into" the collective intelligence of its citizens to tackle complex and wicked problems like the pandemic and the raging environmental crisis. This mechanism has often become extractive, depriving 'communities' identity and energy and, above all, preventing ownership and learning to grow.

Utterly understanding and taking the value of community action seriously means public services investing differently, shifting thinking, culture, and practice. Taking it seriously means a deeper level of commitment, putting com-

munity action at the heart of the public service reform agenda. The two become mutually reinforcing, with one informing and supporting the other (Knight, 2020).

How can we step back from patronising co-production initiatives and, at the same time, giving to communities the structural and economic support they need to keep doing what ‘they’re proving to do best’?

## Care, knowledge, and digital innovation

The mission we are facing is huge, and it gives us the opportunity for critical reflection and conversation, within and outside local government, about the importance of rebuilding relationships with communities as equal and diverse partners and not outsourced agents.

In times of profound transformations, focusing on three aspects could be a first step in building shared public action:

- ❶ Working on a shared understanding, through mutual learning, and of the ‘community’s cultural identity, assets and visions for the future;
- ❷ Building new operating models based on coordination and recognition of local administrators and ‘communities’ abilities and role in shaping better policies,
- ❸ Improving our ability to act as an ecosystem, also thanks to digital technologies and platform-based tools.

Digital engagement is growing. It completes conventional methods of engagement by attracting members of the community who typically ‘don’t participate. Public action must be rooted in deep knowledge of local contexts and even provide community-based digital ecosystem to let the community-embedded knowledge emerge.

Each of our communities is a complex and continuously evolving ecosystem of cultures, ideas, vocations, and assets: if we want to change and improve our governance schemes, if we care about bringing more proactive voices to the table, we need to consider these elements instead of liabilities and deficiencies.

There has been no shortage of economic reforms to expand opportunities: investments in education, the promotion of credit and financial literacy, invest-

ments in job training programs, and more. These conventional reform efforts fall short because they leave in place underlying structural inequities of power, ownership, and control. Too often grassroots communities are either ignored or engaged with as “end users” or “clients”-funded to execute specific initiatives and projects (such as voter registration or direct services), but not to build durable grassroots capacity and infrastructure that cuts across specific policy fights and issue campaigns (Sabeel Rahamn, 2020).

We need to learn to make space and time to listen to and recognise the peculiarities of interdependencies inside communities and deliberately incorporate unusual, often marginalised, perspectives and experiences in policy design and implementation processes.

Asset-based community development changes the relationship between a local authority, its citizens, and communities by focusing on ‘what’s strong, not what’s wrong’ (Lloyd, Reynolds, 2020).

Sometimes, it is not enough to ‘improve systems’, it’s necessary to reinvent them. Organising our societies around efficiency has not clearly paid off. The governments that have handled the crisis well are those where the state invests in taking care and foster relationships with the first value creators in society: citizens. Our current model is missing community power: the role of local people, acting together spontaneously or through enduring institutions, to design and deliver the kind of neighborhood they want to be part of. The economic and social model we need for the future has community power and the civil society that enables it at its heart (Kruger, 2020).

The *Every One Every Day Project*<sup>6</sup>, led by the Participatory City Foundation (a London based charity) is the perfect example to demonstrate the potential of putting local people at the epicenter of making their neighborhoods, cities, and lives better; thus inspiring better policies and relations with local public administrations. The project aims to construct the first large scale, fully inclusive, practical participatory ecosystem putting people, not policymakers, in charge of creating inclusive neighborhoods, made by everyone, for everyone in one of the most challenging London areas. The Borough of Barking and Dagenham (East London) faces enormous socio-economic challenges such as low-incomes, poor education, health, and homelessness. In 2017, building on years of research on participatory ecosystems and the expertise of the Participatory City

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6. <https://www.weareeveryone.org/every-one-every-day>



Foundation, the City Council and several partners launched a five-year project inviting people to suggest ideas for projects and businesses they would like to create together and providing the support needed to bring hundreds of the ideas to life quickly.

The project has been massively disruptive in proving how sustainability and inclusion for our cities can be built combining the energies, creativity and resources of residents, local administrations, businesses, and civic organisations. Observing these models can help learn how to build better public services for the 21st century.

Tapping into citizen insight and expertise is critical to meet community needs truly and to commit to good policymaking.

People working within a new operating model prioritise learning, adaptation and evolution<sup>12</sup> in pursuit of achieving their outcomes. New operating models therefore allow for change within the system to occur and for the system to adapt and evolve as necessary over time. New operating models are anchored in a set of values which apply to individuals, teams and organisation: openness, collaboration, curiosity, equity, agility and agency (Reynolds, 2020).

Making the most of platforms to build (digital) ecosystems has never been so urgent.

We have lived the golden era of participatory tools for public administrations, especially in Europe. This growth can be attributed to increasing dissatisfaction among citizens towards institutions and political leaders perceived to be technocratic, elitist, and distanced from the citizen perspective and growing demand for better access and more influence in public decision-making. Finally, citizens are calling for public administrations to be more accountable and transparent<sup>7</sup>.

The pandemic has once and for all confirmed the crucial role of digital tools and platforms to magnify communities' voices. They have been used to launch campaigns, promote new collaborative initiatives, and mobilise mutual aid anywhere public welfare was struggling, offering training and sharing information.

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7. Digital Future Society (2019) Leveraging GovTech for citizen participation. Innovative policymaking for the digital era [Online] Available here: [https://digitalfuturesociety.com/app/uploads/2019/10/111019\\_Leveraging\\_GovTech\\_for\\_citizen\\_participation\\_digital-1.pdf](https://digitalfuturesociety.com/app/uploads/2019/10/111019_Leveraging_GovTech_for_citizen_participation_digital-1.pdf)

In many ways, Covid-19 has amplified and accelerated the digital efforts that have already been in motion. In a time of social distancing, people have increasingly relied upon digital tools to support collective action across various sectors, just as they have for a broad spectrum of other social interactions (Pinto, Gutelius, 2020).

Digital tools and platforms can indeed become special tools in the process of re-imagining solidarity mechanisms, new forms of social economies and service, and, above all, fostering the transformative potential of collective action inside policymaking processes and institutions.



# **Lessons learned from the network: ambitions, capabilities, processes, methodologies, tools and first results**

Urbact is a European exchange and learning program promoting sustainable urban development, through the exchange of good practices, tools, and knowledge among cities to implement more integrated, inclusive, and participatory development policies.

The Program finances the generation of three types of networks aimed respectively at the creation of local action plans (Action Planning Network), the implementation of integrated urban strategies (Implementation Network), and the transfer of good practices (Transfer Network). Regarding the Urbact III Transfer Network Program, the aim is to create up to 25 good practice transfer networks developed by the various European cities. These networks are led by cities awarded by Urbact for their good practices.

Innovato-R is the Urbact III Transfer Network Program that sees Turin as the leader in transferring the good practice InnovaTO to other European cities.

Starting from the origins of the innovato-R project, this chapter focuses on the structure and methodology adopted, to conclude with a look at the local practices implemented.

## **The origins: overview on InnovaTO project**

Cities all across Europe face similar challenges. One of them is how to guarantee impact with decreasing resources. Far from engaging expensive external consultancies in complex change management processes, InnovaTO's idea is straightforward: turn to the people who know best the administrative machine from inside and encourage them to come up with ideas that can be implemented at no cost, beside time, and can help the city to improve its processes and therefore increase its impact on the lives of its citizens.

In other words, InnovaTO project – proposed during 2014 by two city servants within the Turin Smart city program – was a competition open to municipal-ity employees to develop innovative projects improving the administration performances, reducing waste and/or valuing resources.

Proposals focused on service quality, goods/services acquisition, cost rationalization, energetic optimization, bureaucratic impact reduction, increased data, and digital tools management.

It was a virtuous competition that saw as an added value the direct involvement of employees and the administration sectors interested in developing projects that could help improve the performance of the Municipal Administration.

In numbers: 111 staff members accepted the challenge and proposed 71 solutions that could have improved a diverse range of internal processes.

Proposals were related to service quality improvement (19), new services (7), environmentally friendly projects (7), organisational development (16), employee welfare (5), informatics (3), and operative efficiency (14). The web-platform hosting InnovaTO had more than 4,000 contacts.

It was a success, but Turin's city took almost three years to come back to this idea and decided to leverage the Urbact network's strength and transfer this practice to other cities. Finally, the project passed from the stage of intuition to the award of the best projects of Urbact Program. During this time, a series of phases had to be completed to ensure that the program implementation would run smoothly and to avoid potential risks to become a boomerang for the administration.

As final consideration, the implementation of projects could probably have worked out better, with just a couple of projects being implemented after a long time. Of course, there were many reasons for that, including an unclear mandate for the internal team for this phase and the inertia of the administrative machine, slow to accept change and take charge.

Concerning the experience of InnovaTO, it is possible to underline five important lessons emerging for cities.

- ❶ Public employees can innovate
- ❷ The value of 'safe zones' to think and experiment
- ❸ Providing a framework for ideas is important
- ❹ Innovation leadership takes many forms
- ❺ Sustainable results matter maybe more than leading-edge innovation

### **Innovato-R project: objectives, partnership, structure and expected results**

The Turin experience highlighted some adjustments, and it was in the wake of these considerations that the Urbact III Transfer Network – Innovato-R program was inserted.

Turin intended to use the opportunity of the Urbact transfer network Innovato-R to build on the first edition of the program and improve it, intending to re-launch it and make it a permanent feature in the way local administration operates and improves. Indeed, the way Urbact Transfer Networks works is that cities cooperate not just in the mere transfer of the best practice but in jointly make it better and more robust.

The Urbact III Transfer Network is structured in two phases: the first dedicated to the network creation, the second devoted to transferring the good practice owned by the Lead Partner to the rest of the cities that have joined the network.

In the beginning, the City of Turin worked to expand the network and define the methodology with two project partners, Cluj-Napoca (RO) and Métropole du Grand Paris (FR) – the firsts who expressed interest in adapting and transferring the competition between public employee and demonstrate high motivation.

During the second phase, the InnovaTO concept was transferred to four other cities in Europe that had decided to adopt the good practice and implement it in their contexts: Murcia (ES), Porto (PT), Veszprem (HU), and Rotterdam (NL).

The selection process of the network was a pivotal aspect of implementing the project.

The search for new partners was directed by the same partners' proposal to extend the partnership to cities that were strongly motivated and aware of the need to have HR fully involved. This position led to the refusal of various applications and to restrict the partnership to 7 actors. The partners for phase 2 were selected considering the local context's diversity for the transfer of the good practice, their geographical location, and their development status to cover an appropriate mix of EU Member States. Local context differs in size, population, number of employees, the municipality's role, expectations from the transfer, competence level, and the existing local network level. This diversity allowed an interesting split testing and guaranteed different results, helpful for future adaptation of the best practice in other contexts.

Overall, the partnership presented 7 cities: 2 cities from Western Europe, 2 cities from eastern Europe and 3 cities from southern Europe. 3 of the partners came from less developed regions.

The 7 Transfer City partners could transfer the Good Practice having appropriate competence, resources, political support, and motivation.

The implementation of Innovato-R project lasted 24 months and was divided into 4 Work Packages:

WP1 - Network management

WP2 - Project development (Phase 1) - Transnational Exchange and Learning Activity (Phase 2)

WP3 - Local Dimension

WP4 - Communication and Dissemination

The core activities were part of WP2 and WP3, connected by a common methodological framework.

The activities in WP2 were aimed at creating a positive and productive network, able to follow the challenge of the best practice transfer. Capturing, organizing, and documenting the knowledge generated through the transnational exchange and learning activities was an essential element of Innovato-R, and a priority for the Urbact programme.

The knowledge generated at the transnational level is still available for local-

level activities and local stakeholders. Furthermore, the knowledge generated by the network is still available to a broader audience of local, regional, national, and EU-level policymakers and practitioners not directly involved in the network activities. That is why local activities' framework followed a similar path to one of the networks: the projected stages were the same, but the objectives, outputs, and timeline varied. Indeed, each partner's core team has worked together with the local support group (ULG) in all phases. (see the next section)

The added value of transferring the good practice as part of a transnational network can be summarized in the following expected results - listed at the beginning of the process and still under evaluation:

- improve the practice through peer collaboration, with a particular focus on processes dedicated to ideas implementation;
- provide training to each city's core team on change management for public organizations, service design and digital models of service delivery, to equip them with adequate skills and competencies to lead the creation of appropriate adaptations of the practice in their contexts;
- co-design a set of tools and methodologies aimed at improving the provision of public services to citizens. The local transformation of the practice can be different among the Municipalities involved in the project, but the principles for action and tools are the same;
- implement a pilot during the life span of the project in each partner city, which is used to learn by doing and test the validity of the proposed adapted practice in each local context;
- create a core team and a Urbact Local Support Group in each partner city which is committed to full implementation of the practice after the end of the transfer network, and which has the right attitude, skills, and competencies to perform the job well;
- build a Toolkit with the set of shared tools and methodologies implemented during the transfer process, which is accessible and re-usable by other cities.

As A Consequence, it explains that the adopted methodology for transferability was essential for the project's success: it is necessary to keep the link between the network's level and the local implementation level.



## **Transferability: methodology, phases and outputs**

Considering the nature of the good practice, the methodology and the delicate process of transferring the practice from the specific context where it is generated to other contexts that present different conditions and cultures, the proposed transfer methodology was built around a “learning by doing” principle. The principle combines two existing approaches: Lean Start-up and Design Thinking.

The Lean startup approach favours experimentation, over-elaborate planning, customer feedback over intuition, and iterative design. The lean startup methodology comes from agile development, which originated in the software industry where it works together with customer development, eliminating wasted time and resources by developing the “product” iteratively and incrementally. Even if this methodology is born in a startup environment, it fits well with transferring innovations from one place to another, allowing to formulate theories in a framework that gets tested in a controlled environment to gain relevant feedback for further development refinement.

Design Thinking is a solution-oriented human-centered approach. It means using design tools in all fields to approach specific challenges creatively. Using design thinking, decisions are made based on what future users want, instead of relying only on historical data.

A good practice transfer process’s fundamental activity is to measure how adaptation fits with the local context’s response and then learn whether to pivot or persevere.

All innovation and change management processes should be geared to accelerate this feedback loop. And thus, it was done in Innovato-R project.

The Phase 2 Transnational Exchange and Learning Activity was structured following a design process framework called Double Diamond and using the Lean startup practice tools as pillars: the Minimum Viable Product, Split testing, Pivot and the Build-Measure-Learn loop.

- the Minimum Viable Product is that version of a new product that allows a team to collect the maximum amount of validated learning with the least effort. In the Urbact Transfer Network, an MVP is an improved or adapted version of the good practice that potentially fits with the local context.

- A split or A/B test is an experiment in which a product is tested in different versions simultaneously. In the transfer, the cities develop different pilots for the same best practice and can learn not only from their test but also from others.
- A pivot is a structured course correction designed to test a new fundamental hypothesis about the product, strategy, and growth engine. This allows the partners to flexibly make adaptations while the process is in progress, as often new challenges arise from the implementation.
- The Build-Measure-Learn loop emphasizes speed as a critical ingredient to innovation development. The transfer's effectiveness is determined by the core team's ability to ideate, quickly build a minimum viable product of that idea, measure its significance in the local context, and learn from that experiment.

In other words, these tools represent a learning cycle of turning ideas into pilots, measuring reactions and behaviours during the pilot, and then deciding whether to persevere or pivot the idea; this process ideally repeats as many times as necessary, in the context of the Transfer Network there was time just for one complete iteration of the loop.

These concepts were integrated in a Double Diamond process, adapted from its original formulation to this specific transfer project. The process is composed of 5 phases: Discover, Define, Pilot, Develop and Deliver. The process applies to both the network level and the local level, with the two dimensions informing each other's trajectory.

Each phase of the Double Diamond process is described below:

**DISCOVER** - Generate ideas for improvement and adaptation of the good practice for the local context this phase was executed using design techniques such as brainstorming and service design tools.

**DEFINE** - Starting from the data collected, each partner designed an MVP: the way the good practice looked like in each context and the chosen path for implementation. Each partner should have completed the work organising a test run of the good practice.

**PILOT and SPLIT TESTING** - The experiment was conducted offline and through in-person workshops. All was documented in premade templates and tools.

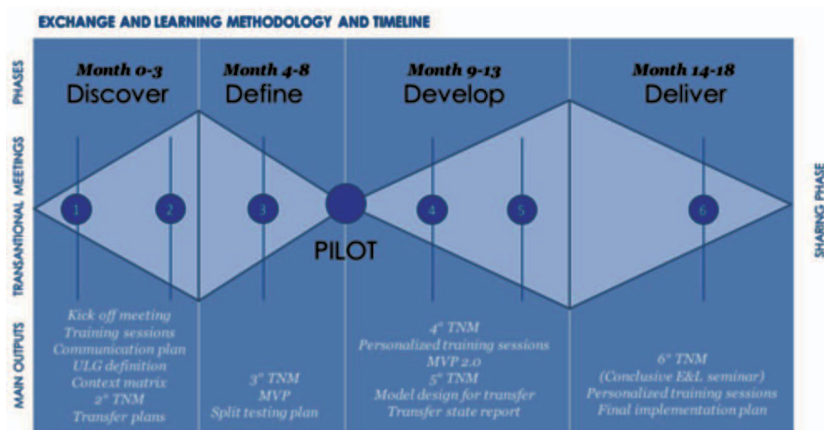
**DEVELOP - Measure:** collecting and measuring the results and final outputs from the pilot through pre-defined KPIs.

- Learn: Distilling learnings from the pilot experiment, testing initial assumptions, reflecting on potential improvements.
- Improve the MVP and decide on a model to be implemented after the end of the project.

**DELIVER (TRANSFER) -** Refining the final version of the transfer plan and working on a local level to provide the best practice, creating a personal toolkit for the transfer and building a new communication strategy.

**SHARING PERIOD -** The last 6 months were planned as the redirection towards National/Regional Good Practice Transfer events organised with the Urbact program's support and the National Urbact Points.

The whole methodology framework can be summarized by the diagram below:



As said each partner moved along the same process at the local level, in parallel with the others.

The network had agreed to adopt the classic Urbact network approach, using what can be described as a carousel model, in which all partners participate in the transnational meetings. This is very much a multi-lateral approach where partners learn together.

In the first 18 months of the project, transnational meetings was devoted to supporting each partner in moving along that loop, transferring knowledge, tools and methodologies, revising plans, reflecting on learning, validating the good practice adaptation and adopting the final local implementation plans.

In specific, at the transnational level 6 meetings in the span of 18 months were organised, devoted to different purposes. At the local level, each transnational meeting was preceded and followed by a Local Support Group meeting to prepare input to the transnational meetings and elaborate outputs from the transnational meetings. In this way, the transnational and the local level were planned as inter-linked. All partners were able to synchronise their activities to progress simultaneously and for the network to learn as a whole.

The methodological aspects summarized below describe a common framework between WP2 and WP3 to keep together the results and the knowledge reached in multi-level experiences.

<p><b>Dephased timeline</b></p>	<p>To better integrate the local activities with those of the networks, the ULG follows a similar framework but with a slightly different timeline. The ULG timeline allows the members to prepare for transnational meetings (preparatory meetings) and reflect on those meetings afterward (follow-up meetings).</p>
<p><b>Train the Trainer</b></p>	<p>During transnational meetings, partners have the opportunity to learn about and try out different methodologies (lean startup, design thinking...). Not only members use the tools immediately during the process to follow learning by doing approach, but they can also transfer their knowledge and train their ULG members to have the capacity.</p>
<p><b>Transnational meeting - local moment</b></p>	<p>During each transnational meeting, a dedicated event is organised for the local group and the general public. Each host city benefits from other members' presence to engage more in the local context, advocate and activate stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Specialised training sessions</b></p>	<p>The training sessions with Turin ULG and the lead expert aim to assist ULG in better understanding the best practice and solving specific issues encountered in the process.</p>

**Sharing stories - connecting people**

Diaries entries and stories on the shared platform are a source of information and a way to connect with other people directly. This is particularly important during and after the testing. For this reason, diaries entries are facilitated by the coordinators and by a dedicated capacity-building seminar.

In the continuous multi-level game, outputs play an essential role: capturing, organising and documenting the knowledge generated through the transnational exchange and learning activities are still now vital elements of Innovato-R, and a priority for the network.

The knowledge generated at the transnational level is available for local-level activities and ULG stakeholders. Furthermore, the network's knowledge is available to a broader audience of local, regional, national and EU-level policymakers and practitioners not directly involved in the network activities.

**The experience and impact in partner cities**

To conclude the overview of the Urbact III Transfer Network - Innovato-R, this section looks at some of the critical dimensions defining the experience of the partner cities:

- the local adaptation of the good practice and how it was piloted
- the innovations activated by the transfer process and the pilot tests
- the impact on the policy making process
- the sustainability of the action moving forward

It is indeed interesting to analyze the experience of the individual cities and how the model presented by Turin was adapted and piloted at local level: pilots were at the heart of the transfer methodology, as they allowed for partners to test the practice and get valuable feedbacks for its adaptation. It is also important to look both at the innovations and impact generated by the transfer process, in order to highlight the relevance of these kind of exchanges at the transnational

level. Finally, we look at the commitments for the future, as a proxy for the sustainability of the action.

In order to build this section, a final survey was conducted among all network partners asking the following questions:

- ❶ What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?
- ❷ How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?
- ❸ What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?

We report below the answers, together with a description of the pilot tests, for each partner city.

# TURIN

## PILOT: leveraging the good practice transfer to power up political support

As the Lead Partner of the network, the city of Turin played a double role as both the guide for partners in the transfer process and the implementer of a pilot. As a Lead Partner, the opportunity through a transfer network is to improve the good practice thanks to the exchange with the other partners.

With regards to the pilot, Turin used it to develop a political platform for the good practice to be embedded in the local administration's processes for innovation on a permanent basis, so to provide continuity of the action, and to improve the implementation phase of the good practice, using peers' input to inject fresh ideas.

Therefore, the pilot in Turin focussed on the implementation phase of five selected ideas for innovation, coming from an existing internal capacity building exercise that required for participants to propose a final project work. This time, as a difference with the first edition of the good practice, the city allocated resources for an external provider specialised in accompanying innovation ideas to reality, that was selected through a public tender. The choice resulted in an effective process for implementation that helped the selected ideas to get to a test phase.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- ▶▶▶ 500 middle management public employees invited to submit their project proposals
- ▶▶▶ 200 employees involved in local Innovato-R events
- ▶▶▶ 44 applications submitted with 140 employees involved
- ▶▶▶ 5 projects selected and implemented involving 24 employees

### What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?

We choose three key learning milestones:

- The lessons learned during the kick-off meeting in Paris (february 2019) from Eric Ries and Cosimo Panetta that brought all of us to directly apply a Lean Design Methodology for innovation. The approach of the minimum viable product (MVP), with its stress on the impact of learning over delivery, was critical for the building of the Turin pilot, where we really worked with “minimum action that could be implemented in the short term” in order to acquire the maximum learning with the minimum investment of resources;
- We went in-depth on the MVP technique during the Murcia meeting in June 2019, under the guidance of the expert, Liat Rogel who also introduces us to the “User Journey”. It brought out many reflections in the work team to create several user journeys for different users. A sort of empathy exercise really helpful in targeting communication activities and structuring the pilot;
- More about our second goal, developing a political and strategic platform for the good practice to be embedded in the local administration’s processes, was the bilateral transnational training session that we organised at Open Incet on november 2019, involving about 50 colleagues from the municipality. Our teachers were two guests from the City of Rotterdam: Jochem Cooman, Strategic Advisor on Innovation and the founder member of the innovation Network Rotterdam (iNR), and John de Ruiters the Project Leader for Innovation of the City of Rotterdam. They are really applying in Rotterdam an open innovation model, where the public organisations improve the way the city copes with the transition processes involved in creating new organisational structures, improving existing ones, redefining processes and creating awareness. What we kept? The importance of “staying under the radar”, keeping out of control, out of planning, out of structure and management, being unstructured, making mistakes and above all exploring. Due to the overcoming pandemic it was also the most engaging European event our colleagues have been able to attend and they really showed to appreciate it.



### **How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

The Innovato-R experience is perfectly embedded inside constant tension towards social innovation, in all its experimentation shapes, that has positioned the city of Turin in a cutting-edge position that has worthed the very recent selection, through the EaSI call VP/2020/010, as seat of the national competence center for social innovation.

### **What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

The city of Turin will pursue contributing to the development of its local innovation ecosystem also translating within the administration itself the concept of open innovation, investing in its human resources and encouraging them to come up with ideas that can help the city to improve its processes and therefore increase its impact on the lives of its citizens.

Awareness of the importance of building new forms of engagement, in which human resources are supported and stimulated to become agents of change, promoters of innovation capable of generating well-being and development for their own community, it's an ongoing process that the administration has clearly in mind. The Innovato-R experience has brought new connections and convergence of views among different departments, including the training service inside HR, and has already impacted on the middle management selection strategy.

In a wider context, Turin will pursue its open innovation strategy, two above all the examples:

- Torino Social Innovation, evolved in Torino Social Impact with a partnership involving the municipality of Torino and more than 100 other public and private organizations. It works as an open platform, a multi-stakeholders system, with different competences in research, entrepreneurship, policies for sustaining young social entrepreneurs, their creativity, their digital competences, their perception for social improvements.
- Torino City Lab, an initiative-platform aimed at creating simplified conditions for companies interested in conducting testing in real conditions of innovative solutions for urban living. Promoted by the City of Turin, it involves a broad local partnership of subjects from public and private sectors interested in supporting and growing the local innovation ecosystem.

# CLUJ-NAPOCA

## PILOT: Using digital tools to storm the innovative potential of public employees

Cluj-Napoca pilot project aimed to generate good case practices that could significantly improve public administration performance, reducing losses and focusing on resourcing. The final goal would be to increase public services' quality.

In Cluj-Napoca case, the key actors that participated in the Innovato-R project were Cluj Innovation and Civic Imagination Centre, the "urban center" heart of the city participation. The ULG welcomed key stakeholders from universities, NGOs, governance, and institutional actors such as the City Hall Social Services and the Metropolitan Area and private partners, local Innovato-Rs and leaders in their own right.

The first pilot call has been open between February and March 2020, on the Innovato-R online platform. Any employee of the City Hall, using their institutional address, could log in via intranet and submit a project idea for one of the four key call priorities.

During this time, 17 complete projects have been submitted despite the difficult global pandemic situation. Each project provided its main idea description, together with an explanation of the project duration, resources to be allotted, and concrete proposed actions.

The projects have been voted on by the ULG members based on shared criteria, and five great ideas have been picked up as finalists and implemented.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- 800 public employees contacted through the process
- 50 civil servants involved in a participatory co-design of the first call
- 43 public employees submitted their project proposals
- 17 projects submitted and 5 selected and implemented

**What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?**

1. The mechanism of creating a URBACT Local Group to discuss and co-design the MVP for Cluj-Napoca adaptation of the Innovato\_R good practice with the learning that came out of it (stakeholders that were not familiar with Public employee work context& competencies, members of the project team learning about how digital tools may be adapted to internal needs and use for the process)
2. The way public employees related to this new challenge and how each understood it and used it in a different context based on their personal values and level of expectations from the tool
3. The potential of the Innovato-R platform to be used by other public entities (and also for Municipality of Cluj-Napoca) in the dual way of A - the place to implement an iteration of call for projects - and B - mapping the learning journey of each entity that uses it as a tool and a good practice to deposit and disseminate experiences, to the network if needed it and also to document the way change is being embraced by each user (public institution) over time

**How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

Being an internal tool the InnovatoR platform in itself is a new tool offered to the need of tackling different problems. In the context of inclusiveness since the public employees were by the structure of the other social innovation tools forbidden to be used by the public employees of the Cityhall (eg. public budgeting platform), it is a welcome alternative that also completes the range of digital tools of the city to boost the innovative potential of different stakeholder in the city's ecosystem.

**What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

In terms of sustainability, one step will be to ensure the inclusion of this tool as the internal calendar and continue with yearly calls for projects. As for development we see two directions: 1 - to develop a multi-stakeholders function on the InnovatoR platform so that other cities can connect and start using it; 2 - to further develop the process trying to include some more participative and connect with the citizens components.

# METROPOLE DU GRAND PARIS

## PILOT - Digital Builder Program: how to create a community of local civil servants to develop new services

“Digital Builders” program is an initiative of the Metropole du Grand Paris representing the context for Innovato-R. The program’s objective is to build a community of local civil servants to develop new digital public services on a metropolitan scale. The program focuses on five issues (digital inclusion, citizens’ participation, relationship with user/citizen, metropolitan resource center and data-driven monitoring), all very coherent with Innovato-R’s mission.

The pilot was structured in three phases. The first one was a two-day workshop, where Digital Builders community-identified five potential metropolitan digital services. Each participant subscribed himself into one of the five working groups. Each group gathered around 30 participants. The second phase consisted of building the project baseline per each of the five issues chosen. The baseline included: goals of the project and ways to reach them; budget draft; identification of potential partners; first actions to launch. During this phase, consultants have followed up on the teams’ work. In the end, due to lack of participation, one project has been abandoned. The third phase consisted of a one-day workshop where each project was presented, given feedback and improved.

At the end of the workshop, 4 services have been identified by the community:

- 1) capacity building for civil servants on digital citizenship;
- 2) a metropolitan online platform for citizen’s participation;
- 3) a management model for users’ experience in local municipalities;
- 4) a metropolitan online platform to share knowledge, feedbacks, and skills.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- 3 full-days of workshop
- 30 local municipalities mobilised
- 5 issues investigated (Digital inclusion, Citizen participation, relationship with user/citizen, Data driven monitoring, Metropolitan resource centre)
- 4 projects developed and 2 selected

**What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?**

1. The launch of the first Digital Builders event : we were impressed by how the community constitute itself quickly. We felt a real eagerness of each participants to collaborate with others civil servant on innovative issues.
2. The MVP and user journey presentation in Murcia Transnational Meeting. These methods really helped us shaping our program.
3. Presentations of the solution of the various project during the Porto Transnational Meeting. The idea to involve the local participants of each project was really and permit us to embody each solution.

**How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

The InnovatoR initiative has been a real leverage inside our structure to support the launching of a program dedicated to promote innovative ideas from civil servants. The program helped us define the calendar of our project. The construction of the local support group has also been a key factor of success of our program. The methodological framework has well completed the expertise of the consultants involve in the project.

**What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

The promotion of innovative idea or process inside public administration is a part of the Metropolitan Digital Strategy. A dedicated funds of 1 million € and a support program, gathering various local innovation experts, are dedicated to help civil servants from local municipalities to implement or test new ideas.

# ROTTERDAM

## PILOT: A digital platform for creative communities

For what concerns Innovato-R context, Rotterdam's city started in 2018 with a ULG composed of 30 civil servants from different departments, all interested in innovation and process improvement. The city has developed over the years a vibrant community of Innovato-Rs both within and around the municipality. What was recognized as a need coherent with the InnovaTO's practice was a digital platform that could complete the community touchpoints with a virtual space. In September 2019 Rotterdam started to work on its pilot by assessing the functional requirements for a first Minimum Viable Product. The MVP1 was designed in November 2019 and developed in January 2020. The idea was to build a platform from scratch, to which users could add ideas, interact with each other and provide solutions from a community perspective.

MVP1 was presented in the Transnational meeting in Cluj-Napoca where it received feedbacks for improvement. After the meeting, the MVP1 went through the testing phase, that was concluded in March 2020. The whole process achieved some excellent results, such as an understanding that the platform should be mobile-first. Some key points for improvement also emerged, and the ULG started to work on them. Some key questions remain open on how to up-scale the digital innovation platform and how to connect the digital innovation platform with other existing online ecosystems. Nevertheless, Rotterdam showed that a small but complete solution for testing is the best way to work into delivering a finished product.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- ➡ 3 iterations of the platform's MVP
- ➡ 3 sprint design workshops organised with developers
- ➡ 20 stakeholders engaged in the local support group

**What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?**

1. Our ULG got together in the digital experimentation center, where we learned about the project as well as about each others drives and challenges as well as about working in such an experimentative environment.
2. The project enhanced the view/perspective on digital points of contact, our innovation platform in particular. We learned a lot about what we liked and what actually works.
3. Socially the biggest innovative benefit for me is the European network of cities. We enjoyed learning from all partners of InnovatoR as we hope to do for many years to come.

**How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

The Innovato-R Transfer Network links very nicely to our existing activities and approach in Rotterdam. Social innovation is in the DNA our city, and the project has been a key opportunity to further this, and embed it within a wider set of stakeholders, including businesses and the university. This is helping us shift to a more balanced way of working – thinking and doing.

**What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

The digital innovation platform we built, supported by InnovatoR, will be launched to our innovation community this year. Besides a web based platform we will also offer apps on android and iOS. The platform will be one of the many Platform2Platforms that we plan to link together in our innovation ecosystem. This ecosystem is beyond the municipality boundaries, beyond the local, national context. Hopefully we can find a way to make it the new European P2P on public innovation.

# MURCIA

## PILOT: Programme for in house innovation and improvement

In Murcia City Hall, bottom-up innovation in public administration has been coming from Civil Servants, working under the concept of Capacity Building and Empowerment of Municipal Employees through Innovative Idea and Solution Generation.

The Urbact method, including the ULG, has been extremely relevant in Murcia Model to ensure involvement and internal follow from Heads of Departments.

Before starting the process, the MVP was clearly defined as “the process to enable and facilitate, even incentivize, in-house innovation and improvement through the “LEI motto” LEI standing for “Logistics, Efficiency and Integration”. A first call for proposals was launched internally in the ULG and it gathered 17 actionable proposals. The proposal chosen for implementation consisted in including primary schools in the routes that pick-up paper waste. Municipal service would have taken care of discarding paper waste from school, using the already existing routes to pick up the waste. In doing, municipal efficiency would have increased, and schools would have saved time and money.

The project was launched in two neighborhoods of the city center, but on the 12th of March 2020 all schools were closed for the Covid 19 emergency, so it was impossible to see the outcome of the project itself.

What was considered successful was the whole approach of involving Civil servants in public administration decisions: the process itself has been effective and efficient, and it’s going to be used as “building blocks” for the upcoming steps.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- 18 stakeholders engaged in the local support group
- 2 iterations of the process completed
- 80 public employees proposed projects
- 9 projects proposed, 10 selected, 5 implemented



**What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?**

Firstly, the MVP, and mainly the illusion of the civil servants involved, both in the ULG and the process itself. Which each iteration people become more motivated as the previous one(s) have made advances ideated by them and their colleagues, of which a number have been implemented, meaning a tangible impact and thirdly the continuous improvement of the procedure used not only to recollect the innovation ideas, but to fully understand the problem, the improvement or solution proposed and why.

**How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

The influence has been tremendously positive, not only internally by informing and incentivising civil servants, but also towards the public, to make our citizens aware of the efforts of the municipality to improve itself. One could say it is more a change of perception and stimulus than it is of policy-change, as the willingness from the municipalities point of view has always been there, but we were lacking the right tool, a tool we have definitely found by applying the Innovator approach.

**What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

Innovator in Murcia will continue in exactly the same way we have been doing so far in the foreseeable future, and always trying to improve the process and the forms. Financing this “policy” is two-fold, on the one hand we have the time the ULG members dedicate to meetings, reviews, investigation, analysis and discussion (part of their work-week), and on the other, by financing the (rated) innovations proposed for which the European Programmes Department looks for funding to implement them.

# VEZPREM

## PILOT: Three key areas of innovation, with a special focus on culture

The city of Veszprem in Innovato-R context, decided to focus on cultural services. The choice originates from the fact that the city will be “European Capital of Culture” in 2023 and the city already displays an intense cultural life. In June 2019, the Innovato-R team decided to organize an online competition open to the employees of the Municipality, its institutions, and Municipality-owned public companies. The competition was based on an online platform where participants could share their ideas by dividing them in 3 key areas – event, action, and process. The proposals submitted could refer to renewing cultural offer in the city, supporting internal actions at the workplace, or refreshing institutional processes. The platform was realized in June, and a call was launched on September 9th, 2019. 58 proposals were submitted and 9 of them were awarded in January 2020.

The next steps required a deeper look into each winning idea to understand its implementation. Also, methodologies were refined to reach the future sustainability of the Innovato-R project in the municipality.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- ➡ 43 public employees submitted their project proposals
- ➡ 58 projects presented
- ➡ 10 projects selected and implemented

### What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?

- Establishment of ULG: the city’s institutions had not yet cooperated in this form, the invited support group members after their initial reluctance became committed supporters of Innovato-R and meant great help in our activities. (we are also using this proven method to form a support group in our other international projects e.g. for DTP Interreg Ister)

- Change of Attitude of the PAs: Employee susceptibility to innovation has changed as a result of Innovator idea contest, the initial low number of interest has increased significantly with Innovation Week workshops. We consider it a success that there has been spectacular progress among employees in terms of innovation-related change, which can be considered a major step forward for change in the office environment.
- Online platform: a well-designed and easy-to-use online opinion gathering platform was created that we can use with minor modifications in the future.

### **How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

It was an important aspect for us to convince the leaders of the Municipality about the importance of the Innovato-R project, let them have a positive attitude towards innovation and reforms related to changes at our workplace. There is no innovation without a change in the attitude of the leaders, and this is a positive contribution to the project. Our mayor presented and recommended the project to the leaders of the institutions involved and at the end, he handed over the awards. At the Urbact National Point conference on transfer networks in Hungary in November, our deputy mayor was invited to the panel discussion and she commented on the different trends and methods of urban development. Our notary gave an interview for Innovato-R film and assured her support for the gym, selective waste collection at the workplace, and other award-winning ideas.

### **What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

The online platform created in the frame of the project provides an opportunity for subsequent surveys among institutions, but also among the general public. A good example is the situation generated by Covid19 when we surveyed the issue of home office experiences among our colleagues using the platform with slight modification. The Mayor of Veszprem would have been supported another contest but the Covid had overwritten the plans, but there is a chance for the future. The VEB 2023 Ltd, which coordinates the ECoC events, has indicated that they would be happy to use the platform in the process of preparation for the 2023 events. It is important that their representatives were also members of the ULG, and they have chosen and implement some ideas that came up in the idea contest and that received ECoC special prizes.

# PORTO

## PILOT: The “Switzerland” Room, a neutral physical space to jointly analyze challenges at work

The Porto pilot solution started to be developed with 2 workshops between July and September 2019. It involved 19 participants from 2 Municipal Departments and 6 beta testers from other 6 Municipal Departments. During the first workshop, the key objective was to explore and identify issues and opportunities and gather relevant information. In the second workshop, attendants had to generate ideas and create prototypes. People were engaged through interactive methodologies.

The winning solution was a non-digital one: it was called “Switzerland room” and it is a neutral physical space, implemented in the Municipality HR Headquarters, where municipal colleagues can meet and discuss openly new ideas. The Switzerland room should facilitate face-to-face interactions, through which people can analyze challenges at work and figure out possible solutions. But also, it can reinforce communication, teamwork, engagement, and motivation. A survey submitted to participants to understand their level of satisfaction regarding the activities and the overall process confirmed the high level of satisfaction. The challenge now is to start using the Switzerland room continuously and create the conditions for users to express new ideas and work towards their implementation.

### PILOT RESULTS:

- 2 full-days of workshop
- 25 participants from 8 municipal departments
- 4 projects developed and 1 selected and implemented
- a permanent space dedicated to innovation created in the municipality

**What are the three main moments of innovation activated by this exchange of experiences?**

1. Experiencing the Minimum Viable Product planning, implementation and assessment processes, and learning from them;
2. Assuring both the Pilot Solution implementation and testing phases, along with exploring prospective scenarios for post Innovato-R lifespan;
3. The whole process of shifting from physical interactions and approaches - both with our Municipal Employees and ULG Members - into brand new virtual settings, while keeping track of the Rationale, Methods and Tools inherent to Innovato-R Philosophy, both at transnational and local scales.

**How has InnovatoR influenced the processes of local innovation-oriented policymaking in your city?**

Innovato-R has been a valuable driver for us to pursue our Vision on building a culture for continuous improvement and process optimization within our Municipality, while enhancing Municipal Employees' engagement and motivation levels. Within this framework, HR Department settled a strong commitment to work on:

- Internal communication and proximity to both Municipal Directorates and Employees;
- Innovation and optimization of processes, management tools and support activities. Innovato-R has, thus, played a crucial role on our pathway towards a strengthened Public Service.

**What is the sustainability of this URBACT-funded experimental process? Are you thinking of structuring a local policy inspired by the InnovatoR experience? If the answer is yes, how do you plan to finance and structure it?**

This upcoming process shall be based upon the continuity of the strategic alliances and synergies matured along Innovato-R process, together with ULG Members and with Porto Digital Association in particular, under the sponsorship of both HR and Innovation Councillors. HR Municipal Department will, thus, continue to adopt HR Policies targeted at upgrading our Municipal Employees' innovation skills, by making the most use of both MVP and Pilot Solution implementation experiences and lessons learned, so that our Municipal Employees can see themselves as Potential Innovators.

# **A look at the public administration to come: from the hierarchical chain of command to the paradigm of the transversal network-based governance**

The Innovato-R project, as stated in previous chapters, stems from a practice that international experts in urban policies have defined as successful. This practice, named Innovato-R, in its conceptual and organizational simplicity, manages to introduce a fundamental principle for the evolutionary process of the organization of municipal offices: creativity and managerial capability of public employees' matter!

Some mechanisms evident in the liaison between public actor and stakeholders, in urban development contexts, have been characterized by a strong horizontality and network-based relationships for several years, even if there is no lack of temptations to centralize and hierarchize. Still, they are legacies of the past that cannot resist a model's contemporaneity no longer linked to modernism or to an industrial society model (think of the triple / quadruple or even quintuple helix models that form the basis of any local sustainable development program). What has already happened in the area, that is moving towards partnership models and agreements based on participatory processes, will have to be reflected within the organizations themselves, be they private or public. While the competitiveness of markets towards innovation drives private companies, the same does not happen for public administrations, considering that some European cities are an exception to this generalization. The model proposed through Innovato-R, based on the Lean Start Up Methodology combine with the Design Thinking approach, represented a significant challenge for the partners involved.

An easy reasoning to conceive within a private organization that must constantly update its business model, but a challenge with many questions within the times and objectives of the public administration, but which has the value of putting at the center of attention and action the human and intellectual capital present in it and often not sufficiently valued, for various reasons.

The biggest of these questions, and which has no obvious answer, is:

**To whom does the public administration of a city respond  
and what is its reference “market”?**

An advanced public administration of a city must be in line with the demand coming from citizens, to know how to understand and respond to it, and increasingly structure itself as a facilitator of processes generated by the practices of deliberative democracy. In this way, it will be able to know the problems and structure himself dynamically and creatively to find a solution. Often the city administrations, on the other hand, continue to behave as a peripheral body of superordinate bodies, intricately linked to the consolidated hierarchies, and give up their centrality as generators of innovation. In tune with the dynamism of local levels, the model suggested by Innovato-R opens up broad and practical perspectives, as seen through the experiments conducted by the partnership.

In this sense, the lesson that can be learned from Innovato-R is that to innovate, it is necessary to have institutional courage, which for cities, understood as a local government body, means knowing how to be protagonists of their locality or putting themselves at the service of the problems of the territory with a critical, creative and open attitude.

In other words, it is easier to have suitable solutions for managing the public administration if the proposals come from the people closer to solve the daily problems of the public administration. A sort of principle of subsidiarity applied within the functioning of the public administration that triggers a change of paradigm, a bottom-up approach, if regulated and coordinated through specific and well thought out initiatives, generates innovative solutions that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the public administration.

**How is this paradigm shift characterized?  
On what principles is it based?**

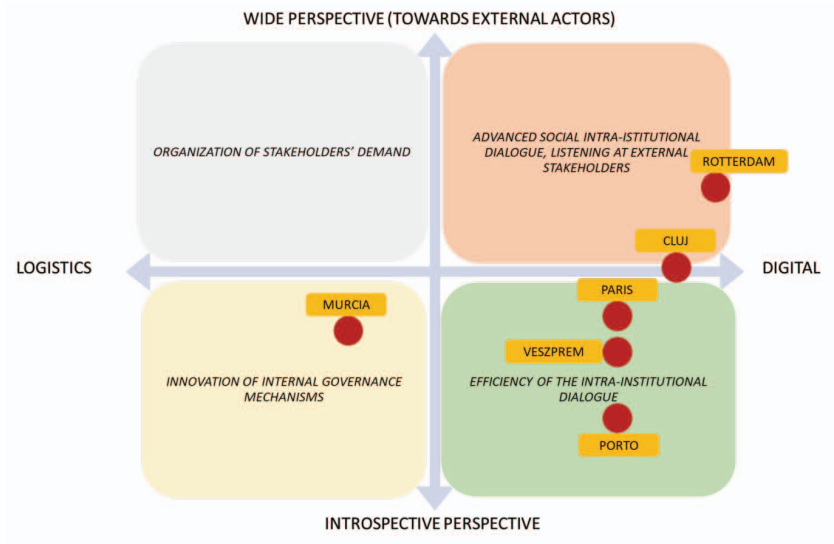
First, the path to be activated to create an environment that favors innovation within a public administration requires the support of decision-makers, or rather of politics. Without this support, it is difficult to undertake any path that induces changes in an administrative department's function. After having guaranteed political support, the strategic path must be structured to allow the active participation of employees.

The strategy will have to ponder some fundamental factors, first it will have to create a competitive environment in which the participants actually feel all on the same level, or create a competitive environment based on mutual trust and respect for privacy (for example, maintaining the anonymity of competing proposals). In their simplicity, these factors operate a first important step, that is, they begin to transform the verticality of the administrative organization chart into a sort of transparent dialogue and *aux pair*, therefore on the same level: verticality begins to become horizontal.

**How did the cities involved express the horizontality required and induced by the practical example put into play by Turin?**

A message emerged from the experiments: the rotation of governance from vertical-hierarchical to horizontal-reticular passes through digital assets enhancement. All the cities involved, except for Murcia, which has focused more on a logistical reorganization, invest in digital platforms such as instance aggregators that connect problems, departments, officials, and other platforms. Nowadays, the local public administration that wants to be competitive understands that it must structure the dialogue through advanced computer networks. The challenge is to open these platforms to interaction with the outside world, while many of the partners involved have continued to have an introspective gaze, but this step will necessarily have to follow when the management model has changed internally, and the obsolete hierarchical logic is cracked. Logics that do not allow to give space to individuals' expression, creativity, and intellectual potential: networking, promoting collective intelligence through the liberation of individual skills, this is the simple lesson of Innovato-R. The following table summarizes a possible interpretation of the experiments implemented by the Innovato-R partnership:





# CONCLUSIONS

## **About Innovative Thinking and Design, and the urgent Need to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the local public administration.**

*by Didier Vancutsem, board of directors, ISOCARP Institute*

Cities are drivers of change in today's world. To achieve the 21st century of the urban humanity, cities and regions together with other national and global partners have to work together to craft their respective policies, legal frameworks, strategies, and actions that embody the key principles of a new -urgently needed- urban paradigm.

Local governments and local public administrations are the institutional drivers of city development: they have to provide leadership and visions for the urban communities. As they require a clearly defined mandate and adequate means to operate through a large degree of autonomy, local governments need also flexibility and creativity to design, plan, manage and deliver effective functioning and decision-making processes, in relation with other tiers of government.

While the role of national governments is to define and provide national policies, frameworks and legislation, national governments should also empower and allocate resources to local authorities commensurate with their mandate: there is a need to set in place an adequate regulatory and legal framework in order to articulate effective partnerships between industries and other economic actors. A proven and effective solution is the establishment of dedicated local development agencies, urban living hubs or “phygital” platforms.

While local public administrations have to use all possible means of interaction with private, non-governmental actors and their inhabitants towards a definition, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies, and plans, it is also relevant that they adopt policies in an open way. Here, a gender perspective and affirmative actions aiming at reducing gaps

between women and men, girls and boys at all levels would certainly help. Tools proposed by the URBACT Innovato-R are the right approach. Participation methods include for sure citizen audits and other tools should be in place for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies, programmes and budgets.

► **New forms of engagement and decision-making processes are needed**

The open consultation processes, platforms and other means have to be used to involve inhabitants, including children and youth, and marginalized groups, to allow them to participate effectively. It is recommended that all tiers of government will have to use these integrated processes, also taking into account the needs of new urban dwellers such as refugees and migrants. As an evidence, these processes engage, raise awareness and build a sense of community, extremely needed in current times: based on bottom-up approaches using interactive media and tools, including digital means accessible to all, these processes will have also to include art and culture as an effective engagement approach allowing alternative ways of expression.

A further key aspect of innovative engagement and decision-making process is the further implementation of the principles of the Transfer of Knowledge (ToK) process. Interaction of all fields involved in innovative forms of governance provides a potential for breaking through the limits of traditional disciplines. Reviewed information and elaborated science also from networking activities focussing on generation of specific outputs have to increase a consequent ToK through interaction among stakeholders and integrated thinking, including co-creation and co-design, in particular beyond the scientific network to practitioners and policy makers. Here, the Innovato-R project is confirming that a transversal networking, strongly diverse in capacity building and consolidating knowledge, can develop a critical mass of interaction and added values.

► **Future of cities has to be found in citizens empowerment, co-creation and co-design**

Furthermore, we should be aware that e-governance solutions are effective means to engage citizens but also to manage the operations of cities: the interactive management of services helps to ensure the effective and timely coordination of service delivery to end-users, as well as to gauge consumer satisfaction.

This leads to 'smarter' cities driven by intelligent management and user feedback supported by technology. However, smart city approaches should always be people-centered rather than technology driven and reflect the collective intelligence of communities.

*The innovato-R project develops the appropriated response to the current development – and evolution – of our local social ecosystems encountered in several European and global cities. It delivers the expected solutions by enabling innovation on the right governance level, empowering local administrations to act crucial and urgently needed transformations within a bottom-up process.*

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I working papers nascono dall'attività di progetto e di studio del gruppo di ricerca della Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini. Sono uno strumento agile di informazione che permette la sistematizzazione e la diffusione dei lavori realizzati sulle principali tematiche d'interesse della Fondazione.