

OPEN GOVERNANCE

MAKING DIGITAL TOOLS
WORK FOR CITIES AND
CITIZENS

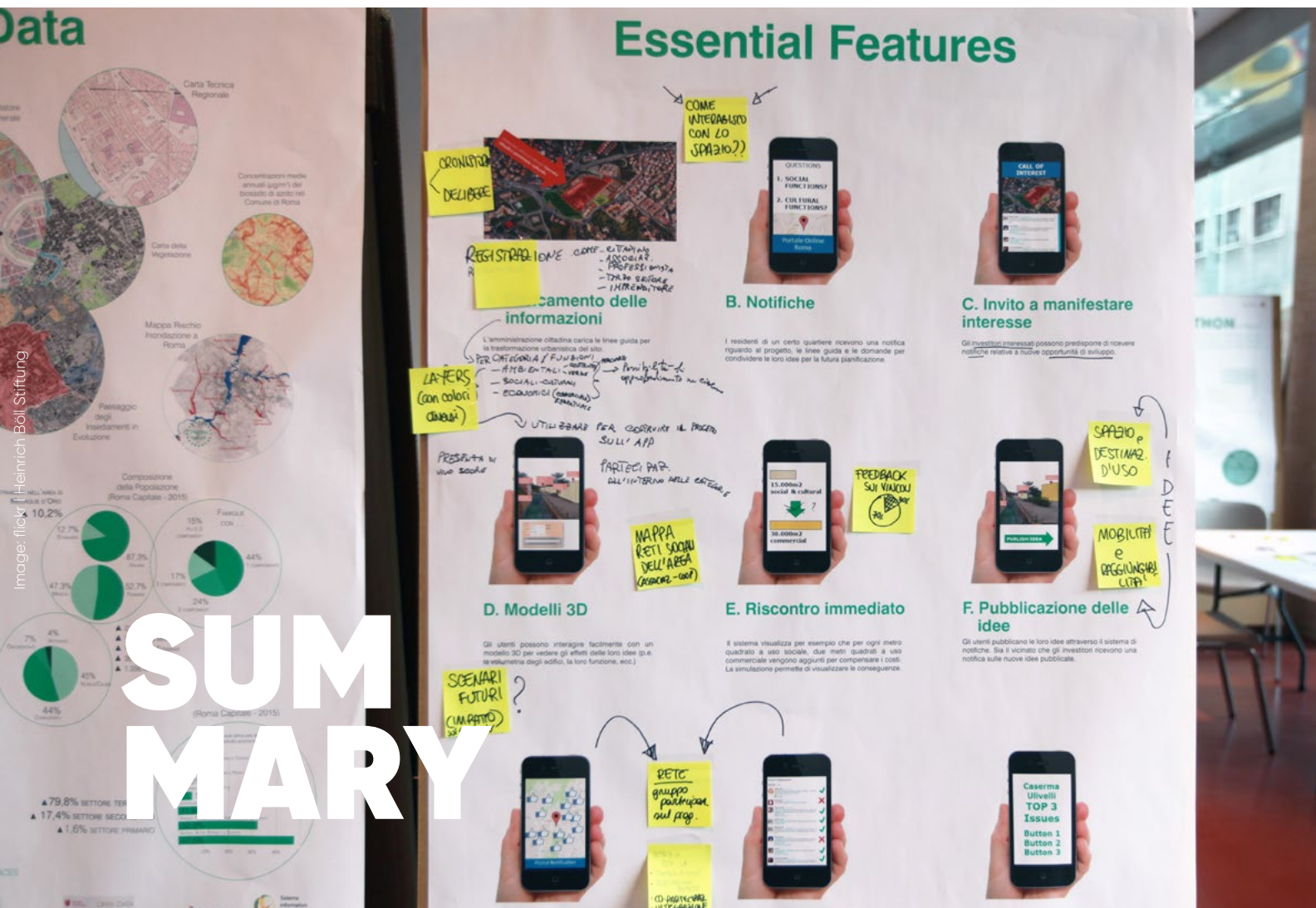


OPENING UP THE SMART CITY

WWW.SMARTICIPATE.EU

CON TENT

| | |
|---|-----------|
| SUMMARY | 03 |
| BACKGROUND | 05 |
| USING ICT TO CREATE NEW PUBLIC SERVICES | 06 |
| 12 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE ICT OPEN GOVERNANCE TOOL | 06 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 03 |



SUMMARY

This document provides a set of 12 recommendations for municipal authorities interested in developing or implementing an ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) system for digital participatory processes and improved urban governance. These recommendations, made on the basis of experiences learned during the **smarticipate project**, aim to help readers avoid common mistakes and potential pitfalls related to digital participatory platforms.

BACK GROUND

Over the last 20 years, there has been nothing short of a revolution in how people across Europe and the world access information and communicate. In 2016, internet connections were present in 85% of Europeans' homes, more than double the amount in 2007 ([Eurostat, 2018](#)), and nearly eight out of ten Europeans now use the internet regularly. At the same time, the open data movement has taken off, with cities and national governments beginning to provide their vast datasets for any interested business or individual to use freely.

ICT and open data have an enormous potential to change how city administrations interact and engage with citizens on urban planning matters. From crowd-sourcing ideas to open consultations and sharing of information between residents and city departments, there are a number of opportunities that have only begun to be uncovered by municipalities. But designing an ICT tool or platform to help solve an urban planning issue is not a simple task; challenges include ensuring buy-in from citizens and city stakeholders, identification of useful features that

are feasible to implement, availability of fine-grained digital data, catering to different demographics, maintenance and upkeep, and many other facets of development.

The **smarticipate project** set out to overcome these challenges and designed an interoperable, modular and extensible digital platform for urban planning use cases – from user need identification to trialling and deployment in three European cities: London, Hamburg and Rome. Based on the experiences of the three-year project, this policy brief provides 12 key recommendations for city officials considering how best to implement a digital participatory platform for urban governance.

Businesses have been quick to capitalise on the changing behaviour of their customers, offering a range of services from travel planning to online banking, e-commerce, booking systems, taxi and ride-share services, and countless other innovations. Non-profit organisations and associations also harness tools like interactive maps and social media to raise awareness and funding, frequently using open data to highlight urgent societal issues. Some local governments have begun to follow suit in adopting ICT for municipal purposes, but often only in basic ways.

"A SMART CITY IS A PLACE WHERE THE TRADITIONAL NETWORKS AND SERVICES ARE MADE MORE EFFICIENT WITH THE USE OF DIGITAL AND TELECOMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITS INHABITANTS AND BUSINESSES."

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/smart-cities>

**BUT CAN A SMART CITY ALSO
PROVIDE NEW NETWORKS
AND SERVICES WITH THE
HELP OF ICT?**

Photo: Roma Capitale



Photo: Roma Capitale

For example, many local authorities have introduced internet portals to publish information or provide services for citizens. But only few have gone so far as to experiment with e-voting, participatory budgeting, and other mechanisms which not only improve existing processes, but fundamentally rethink how, using ICT, citizens can better take part in urban governance.

only consist of information delivery services, such as the digitalisation of documents or provision of contact forms. The potential of open data is also often underutilised, with blocks of data simply published on city websites, inaccessible to non-technical users.

At the European and international level, there is strong political support to leverage ICT tools for urban planning, citizen participation, energy management, mobility planning and other domains. The **eGovernment Action Plan** (2016–2020) and the **Tallinn Declaration** show the interest of both the European Commission and EU Member States to continue investing in the modernisation of the public sector and to take advantage of digital tools. The launch of the **EU General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR) simultaneously reflects the importance of personal data usage and collection to European regulators.

As of today, many cities have not adapted their municipal planning processes to take advantage of the benefits ICT provides. Furthermore, apart from a handful of pioneers, ICT platforms and services are not very sophisticated, and often



Photo: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

USING ICT TO CREATE NEW PUBLIC SERVICES

The public sector – like the private sector – has the capability to leverage ICT to create new public services that have profound impacts on the relationship between municipalities and the communities they work for. At the beginning of the smarticipate project, the consortium produced a **scoping report** with examples of ICT enabled open governance from across Europe and the world. These examples, as well as dozens of others that were not covered in the report, demonstrate the novel ways in which cities can use ICT to provide new services for their citizens. Following the piloting phase of the smarticipate platform in Hamburg, London and Rome, the project also published a guide on **How to Develop a New Public Service**.

The smarticipate project aims to co-create a platform that helps citizens and local authorities exchange information needed to help shape their cities. The project consortium, consisting of researchers, public administrations, and private and non-profit organisations, worked to research and implement a digital product that could achieve this goal. During piloting stages in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (London), the City of Hamburg and the City of Rome, hundreds of participants and stakeholders were involved in the development process. An

additional set of stakeholder dialogue events engaged European experts, additional researchers and local government representatives.

The outcome of the smarticipate project is not only a practical tool, which other cities are able to adapt and use in their own contexts, but also several **publications** which document lessons learned during the process. The recommendations below represent the key findings of the project which are transferable to other cities and similar initiatives.



Photo: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

CLUSTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

PROCESS DESIGN



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION



12 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGNING AN

SEEK PROBLEMS THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM ICT FOR CONSULTATION, VISUALISATION OR FEEDBACK.

Not all urban planning issues have a digital solution, and for many it is only a piece of the puzzle. Start small with a clearly scoped problem, and – if it can be supported by a digital tool – design or use a tool (such as a feedback platform) that is modular and can be applied to more than one urban planning scenario. This allows you to build upon the success of smaller trials and reduce the risk of failure.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

MAKE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR PROJECT.

This includes securing financial resources, administrative staff capacity, technical development staff and developing a plan to ensure the longevity of the initiative. With the ever-increasing number of apps and platforms, users are sceptical about “one-off” platforms and projects that quickly come to an end. A successful platform must be well-equipped to remain self-sufficient, at least for the foreseeable future (beyond a time frame of one or two years).

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

ASSASS THE EXISTING DIGITAL TOOLS THAT ARE AVAILABLE OR ALREADY BEING USED.

Many communities, associations or individuals might already be using digital tools to connect, exchange ideas, and further their projects. Look for websites, apps, social media groups, and other services that might already be addressing part of the problem you’re looking to solve. Consider whether an additional platform or tool is necessary, and how it could enhance or integrate existing initiatives.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT YOUR INITIATIVE IN A COMPREHENSIVE MANNER.

A strong communication campaign within your municipality will help ensure visibility and an initial interest from potential users. Advertise your project online (via a website and social media), make use of print media (e.g. adverts newspapers and public spaces), connect with existing networks, and consider “meet and greet”-style events to give your initiative a face. (For more information on smarticipate’s mobilisation strategy in the pilot cities, read [“How to organise a Smartathon”](#))

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIVERSITY OF END-USERS FOR A MUNICIPAL SERVICE.

Most users will be satisfied with simply receiving information – understanding planning rules, receiving notice about planning decisions, etc. Some users will want to change rules or voice their opinions about how decisions should be made. A few users will challenge existing norms and want to break the rules. A well-designed system should be able to accommodate all of these types of users.

PROCESS DESIGN

INVEST TIME IN OPENING GOVERNMENT DATA IN A USABLE AND INTEROPERABLE FASHION.

Open government data can provide the basis for innovative services, but very often it is only accessible for those who know how to find it and what to do with it. Furthermore, data within a local municipality is often split between departments, with limited infrastructure and processes for sharing or opening the data. If a platform is to run on open data, it is critically important to have a common understanding within the municipality about what types of data will be made available and how, including any potential licensing and/or usage restrictions. To make full use of public data, it should be opened for use by interested parties. Open data should be provided in open and well-established formats to enable a wide audience to consume it. A tool like the smarticipate platform can help make open data accessible and usable for the large majority of citizens that do not have the technical capacity to use it in its raw format.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

EFFECTIVE ICT OPEN GOVERNANCE TOOL

CAREFULLY MANAGE EXPECTATIONS AND PROMISES OF WHAT YOU WILL DELIVER.

Stakeholders will quickly recognise a digital tool that has no real impact on end results of planning. From the outset, make clear what role your ICT tool will play in the participatory process, and commit to fulfilling this. A misstep here can result in a breach of trust, undermining the entire initiative.

PROCESS DESIGN

ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESSES ARE NECESSARY FOR LONG-TERM PLATFORMS TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

Through structured participatory events, such as [Smartathons](#), users should have the chance to continually suggest improvements for your system. This allows the system to adapt to changing conditions and expectations.

PROCESS DESIGN

PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO FIND SUPPORT IN THE CITY.

Getting clubs, associations and other civil society groups on board can bring new energy to digital platforms. Digital projects designed by local administrations should be designed in such a way that multiple actors can find something in it for themselves, rather than tailoring a system to cater only to one group of users. What's more – some initiatives or organisations might already be developing their own digital tools. Aim to complement existing tools and platforms rather than compete with them.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

AUTOMATION OF PROCESSES AND INTERACTIONS CAN HELP, BUT DON'T HIDE BEHIND IT.

Automated feedback – an innovative feature of the smarticipate platform – uses open data to provide users with a digital playground where they can explore the possibilities for shaping the development of their neighbourhood. For example, city datasets can feed into an interactive map that lets users experiment with where to place new trees, bicycle parking, electric charging stations, parks, and more. At the same time, users should not get the impression that their local planning authorities are using a digital platform to avoid face-to-face interaction. Traditional avenues for dialogue with residents, such as public meetings and workshops with citizens, should also be offered.

PROCESS DESIGN

TAKE CRITICISM IN STRIDE.

Part of increased participation in urban planning decisions means facing critical responses from the public. Though confrontations can be unpleasant, digital tools and platforms can help begin diffusing them, using continuous dialogue to turn negative feedback into a positive solution. It is essential to engage with negative feedback quickly and in a positive manner.

PROCESS DESIGN

EARLY INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND END-USERS IS ESSENTIAL.

There is a great risk in developing a system without first consulting those you hope will use it. Cast a wide net at the start of the process to identify the range of concerns and wishes in your community to make sure you are addressing appropriate issues. The identification of end-user requirements is a good first step. The user requirement gathering methodology for the smarticipate project is further described in [this document](#).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations included in this paper are the result of the smarticipate platform development and trialling across three European cities (Hamburg, London and Rome) over the course of three years in the framework of a European Commission funded project. Nonetheless, the list cannot be considered exhaustive. The design and implementation of a useful and sustainable ICT platform must be considered within the local context of a municipality, taking into account relevant stakeholders, their capacities and objectives. By taking the above recommendations into account and consulting early and frequently with local actors, municipalities will be in an advantageous position to deliver a system that meets the needs of a broad range of planning issues and urban stakeholders.

Further reading can be found on the smarticipate website, including various publications referenced in this document: www.smarticipate.eu.



Photo: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

DISCLAIMER

TITLE

Open governance: making digital tools work for cities and citizens

PUBLISHED

January 2019

AUTHORS

- › Joseph Marshment-Howell (ICLEI)
- › Ania Rok (ICLEI)

REVIEWERS

- › Paul McDonald (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)
- › Thorsten Reitz (wetransform)

LAYOUT

Stephan Köhler (ICLEI)



This policy paper was created and is published in the framework of the smarticipate project.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693729.

_PROJECT PARTNERS

