

Interview Saint-Gilles and Brussels

For more information about this interview, please contact Mr. Maxim Chantillon (KU Leuven Public Governance Institute – maxim.chantillon@kuleuven.be)

Comments on Presentation

- What do you expect from the study?

Very enthusiastic about the Toolkit and about the structured research approach. Links the project to another project, HECTOR – lead by the ULB, financed by BELSPO.

- Potential proposal of case studies?

There are two leads for cases studies. First, we can follow the city of St-Gilles in its digitalization, in its relation with its citizens (via survey), in the relation between political and administrative worlds. Furthermore, the City of Brussels works on the digitalization of the spatial planning department (until know very often a “digital-paper-redigital-repaper”-tradition – currently there is the will to digitalize the new and ongoing spatial planning projects as well as the archive. Can be highly interesting for our case of the cadastre.

- Recommendations ?

Study of the emerging Blockchain technology for Open Data and e-invoicing in the “Infrastructure” enabler.

Functioning Saint-Gilles and Brussels

- Do you interact with any of the regional service integrators ? With the CIRB ?

Tensions with the CIRB.

- They state that the CIRB imposes its products, processes and software to others. However, the software do not take into account the users because of a lack of dialog. (example : Saint-Gilles wants to archives on bands whereas CIRB prefers datacenters)
- Other concrete example : The « NOVA » platform for that support urbanism processes has been designed internally by the CIRB without taking into account the needs of the public servants in administrations although the needs are very different. They only issues “Patches” to improve the software afterwards. Now, the CIRB has realized its mistake and comes back to the user/public servants/administrations. However, this interaction is limited to the presentation of a version “0,x” to the users that is slightly modified after the feedback received.
- Other points to mention: CIRB is very hierarchical and work also in this way in relation to others. Very personal, leads to internal tensions.

- Interaction with other local communities

The interviewees described three workgroups (“Groupes de Travail Intercommunal”) that are active in Brussels – unclear if there is overlap and what the concrete results of the workinggroups are:

- Recent intercommunal workinggroup « Esimplif » (Groupe de travail intercommunal)
- Workinggroup IT that focuses on technical issues and driven by the local community of Jette
- Their workinggroup of « Transition Numérique » that gather 50 persons to talk about numerical transition. They gather Jurists, IT, OIP, State archives, Local Communities, but exclusion of private sector because of Lobbying threat (they are however invited to give presentations from time to time). The following organizations are represented: French Community, the Brussels Capital Region, ULB and State Archives – M: surprisingly, not a single organizations of Flanders is member). Members at the local level: City of Brussels, Auderghem, Etterbeek, Anderlecht, Jette, Koekelberg, Sint-Gillis, Schaarbeek, Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe.

Those workinggroups emerged as a result of the problematic lead that was taken by Workinggroup on Geodata. This group did not reach any results, therefore the new group committed a 'putsch' (literally used by representative of Saint-Gilles).

One of the other issues are the tensions and historical legacies that exist between the different local authorities in the Brussels Capital Region: 19 of them, all have different projects and needs (M: personally I doubt this, it is more a political problem than an administrative thing – more or less all local authorities are confronted with similar issues).

E-services

- What drove the digitalization of your local communities ? Political will or citizens' expectations and demands ?

Two options exist:

- The digitalization came from a political will thanks to policy documents. However there is a mismatch between the politics, thinking in term of citizens' demands and having a short term election perspective, and the administrations, that gets an impossible load of work because of the desires of the politics. That is why they are critical for the "Smart City" projects that add an extra layer of complexity to the public servants.
- Some projects emerge from the administrations themselves and then, a dialog with the politics is necessary to get the necessary support. Both have to work iteratively with each other to "sell" the project thanks to buzzwords. The interviewees have designed two key documents : "Schéma de dématérialisation" and "Schéma de metadata" (both documents were presented, we will request a copy).

The **main difficulty** with each digitalization project is the involvement of many different actors with conflicting goals (Citizens that want a better service quality, IT managers that manage servers, Record Managers that care about security of information and other public servants that do not want too many changes in their workflow).

A number of other issues were identified as well: lack of time, lack of efficiency, existing silo culture (within and between administrations – on the same and different levels).

- Interoperability issues

Saint-Gilles has a silo culture where there is little communication between departments. Furthermore, the user is not put in the loop (for requirements, for training,...). The interviewees has introduced a gentle competition spirit between administrations to drive digitalization. For instance, the public servants were required to go into the code of the software to introduce urbanism permits although they have no formation for this (M: the problem of 'educating people on how to use software / e-services seems to be an often neglected issue). Furthermore, private sector often has a monopoly on the tools and software they develop – they can block the local authorities.

For both respondents the interoperability is a key issue to be solved (e.g. the system that are build need to allow interoperability and the inclusion of other e-services).

Citizen Focus

- How do you collect their requirements of the users of e-services ? How do you adapt it when the end users are the citizens ?

In St-Gilles, they made a survey to gather the needs of citizens. The resulting document will be sent by the interviewee. However, this was the only direct way of interaction with citizens that exists.

Location-based data

- Role of the NGI :

They interact with the NGI for the CityGIS and with Rink Kruk for metadata linked to INSPIRE. CityGIS is an internal tool that aims at being external at the new version. It responds to the needs of the citizens for studying the history of their buildings – however only the last three years are currently

available. This project raises tensions with the CIRB and BruGIS. CityGIS will be replaced by another tool, that is more user-friendly and open to the citizens.

Open Data

- What is your policy on open data? Do you share some with federal administrations – Regions – Provinces - Private operators – Citizens?

There is still a mismatch between the politics and the « creative commons » movement.

They wish to use “harvesting” in order to put their open data on the regional platform. This also expresses a tension between St-Gilles and CIRB because the CIRB wanted to have access to the data.

They also do an inventory of existing datasets. That is why they build a metadata schema (with geolocalisation data) in order to find more easily the data (ex: no needs to have data over trees if we don't know where they are).

They use data cleansing software to clean their data (OpenRefineTool, ODI Certificate) in order to reach the “Five Star Web”

In Brussels, the Open Data approach is more difficult because it is a manual process to extract the data. The department for spatial planning is the “weak pupil” – however, it will probably become a priority as it is in the political priorities of the city.