

Big data and software that decide everything (or almost): how to save public money with technology

By now, digitized companies and institutions can count on large amounts of data. The latest generation systems know how to use them to determine for themselves how to eliminate waste, says Fabio Zoffi, chairman of the ORS Group: "It would be a peaceful revolution for the public administration"



Millions of data as a weapon. An algorithm as a viewfinder. And a brain to shoot, without missing a shot. Here is what would be the ideal way to reduce waste, in the private sector but above all in the public. It is the intelligent spending review, what we could do today, in the time of big data. Because the raw material - that is, data on expenditure flows and services offered - exists. And there are also methods to process it and make sense of it. "There are real unused or misused gold mines: terabytes of data, both within companies and in institutions, collected but not exploited". To say this, it is Fabio Zoffi, chairman of ORS Group, Italian and Piedmontese jewel of big data. A company born in 1996 (that is, before the theme became fashionable) in Roddi, province of Cuneo, and which is now of a multinational level.

Mathematics against waste

"Today - continues Zoffi - both companies and public administrations have digitized their processes: it means that they have enough data to direct the use of their resources in the right direction". Mathematical models allow you to predict, for example, flows on highways or in a hospital, based on day or time. And they allow you to cross-reference them with other data, be it those of the staff database or the beds of a department. This is enough to

find the ideal balance, to establish employee shifts and the right strategy to save resources. But little is done in companies and practically never in the public.

The software decides

It is not only the quantity and quality of the data that matters, but rather the systems for processing them. The software makes all the difference and they have focused on Roddi's company in 18 years of work. In fact, the most sophisticated and modern programs do not just interpret the numbers, they go further: they know how to manage resources and optimize costs. "They make decisions - explains Zoffi - and they do it based on data, therefore on objective criteria. So big data are not only a beautiful and colorful tool that offers information to those who then have to decide: they are the starting point for systems that know how to achieve the set objectives. It applies to the management of a robotic factory, as for the public administration ".

The software doesn't decide

Seen in this way, it would seem a disturbing transfer of responsibility and sovereignty to machines and algorithms. Few would agree with the idea of leaving software to guide a company, hospital, city, let alone the entire public administration. "But it's quite the opposite - assures Zoffi - because the system can be given constraints and criteria. Maintaining strategic or political leadership is vital and feasible by inserting variables, parameters that the software uses to modulate its recipe. But at the same time waste and craftiness can be minimized. If we want to do it, thanks to big data, we would have a peaceful revolution in the public administration ".

<https://www.lastampa.it/tecnologia/2015/03/23/news/big-data-e-software-che-decidono-tutto-o-quasi-come-risparmiare-soldi-pubblici-con-la-tecnologia-1.35286942>