

Measuring the understanding of the link between sustainability and smart cities: The case of 215 business students in Belgium

Djida Bounazef-Vanmarsenille, Nathalie Crutzen

Smart City Institute. HEC Liège. University of Liège. 35 rue Saint Gilles. 4000. Liège. Belgium

New researches on the future of urban life explore potential opportunities and threats generated by the emergence of smart cities. These researches mainly highlight the importance of associating sustainability to the emergence of smart cities. They identify several combinations related to how a territory supports both sustainable and smart growth. The corporate citizenship is encouraged by local governments to ensure a sustainable territorial transition, an adequate quality of life and a growing emergence of smart cities. Citizens impact and are impacted by the emergence of sustainability and smart cities. Their understanding of the link between sustainability and smart cities defines the level of their support and engagement towards projects implemented on their territory. The understanding of this link is not well defined in the literature review. Moreover, the association between sustainability, smart cities and citizens is emerging in recent researches only on the improvement of life quality or on strategies to increase corporate citizenship. For this propose, this paper explores how to measure the understanding of the link between sustainability and smart cities. The research explicitly targets 215 business students with a strong interest in sustainability and smart cities to study a specific subcategory of corporate citizens. The paper proposes an explorative quantitative case study based on a factor analysis to measure different understanding between sustainability and smart cities. Based on factors, findings reveal five categories of business students with different understandings: (1) smart city-oriented, (2) sustainability-oriented versus smartness-oriented, (3) discovers, (4) urban development-oriented, and (5) inclusiveness-oriented. Based on axes, sustainability is easily comprehensible comparatively to smart cities. As a result, sustainability is defined as a strategic component in developing smart cities. Moreover, findings highlight that it is necessary to have a direct link between sustainability and smart cities to emerge a sustainable urban development.

Key-words: sustainability, smart cities, corporate citizens, understanding, categories