**Organizing the smart city transformational process: a narrative analysis of the Wallonia’s digital strategy 2015-2018**

Cities are facing unprecedented societal challenges and are “at the heart of global change” (Acuto and Parnell, 2016: 873). According to the United Nations (2017), harnessing a smart-city approach to sustainable urban development is key to meet the aspiration which society has to: (1) attain resource efficient, safe, inclusive and accessible urban environments; (2) sustain economic growth based on the principles of environmental sustainability and inclusive prosperity; and (3) provide equal access for all to public goods and high-quality services.

Enabling smart city development is an ambition which an increasing number of cities are trying to achieve by designing and implementing strategies which make it possible to build a platform of ICT solutions which are deployed to tackle major social challenges and meet urban sustainability priorities. However, policy makers at the municipal level may have different understandings of how smart city projects ought to be envisioned and developed, ranging from a technology-led strategy to a more human-centered holistic view (Desdemoustier et al. 2019). Therefore, national and regional governments might put together strategic guidelines to consistently organize and direct the smart city development at the municipal level. These guidelines have the authority of legal mandates and, thus, exert a powerful harmonizing influence on smart city projects developed at the municipal level within a country; for example, by offering financial incentives to municipalities in return for compliance with the guidelines (Tang et al. 2019). While existing research provides detailed insights into the strategic principles for smart city development at the municipal level (Mora et al. 2019), the way how supra-municipal policy-makers frame smart city development remains underexplored and is the gap we address here.

In this research, we look at how regional governments’ strategic guidelines organize the development of smart city projects. To accomplish this, we adopt a narrative view of strategy (Barry and Elmes 1997) and examine how governmental policy narratives sets a discourse of direction orientating concerned stakeholders in their context and prospecting guidelines for future action.

Through an in-depth analysis of the Walloon government’s digital strategy 2015-2018 in Belgium, the article argues that smart city projects at the municipal level might be framed by supra-municipal governments as policy instruments to facilitate the transformation of cities into hubs for high-tech digital business.

Section 2 provides the theoretical framework of this research, whereas sections 3 presents the case study and the methods. Section 4 presents the findings, whereas section 5 provide discussion and conclusions.

**References**

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