



Multi-stakeholders' Collaborations in Smart City initiatives: An Institutional Logics Perspective

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EARLY-STAGE RESEARCH PROJECT !



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(SHORT) HISTORY ABOUT THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

- May 2023 : Research idea and formalized a research proposal (Community engagement in Smart City initiatives: an institutional logics perspective)
- June – Sept 2023: First data collection
- Autumn 2023 : Several research meetings with co-author and external advisor(s)
 - few signals of community engagement but need for more data
 - Interesting findings about (1) the institutional logics adopted by some stakeholders + (2) no signs of tensions/conflicts at all between them
- Oct 2023 – April 2024: Second data collection (focus group with the community; participant observations)
- May 2024: First analysis of the data by the two authors
- June 2024: Very early draft ... for EGOS
 - Multi-stakeholders' collaboration in Smart City initiatives : an institutional logics perspective



STARTING POINT ...

- Developing innovative solutions through collaboration and interaction between multiple and diverse stakeholders is one key approach to drive societal change (eg. Ferraro et al, 2015; Reypens, 2019; Bryson et al. 2006, Bryson et al, 2015; Dentoni et al, 2015; Zimmerman et al 2021; Pache et al, 2022; Fayard, 2023; Gegenhuber and Mair, 2023)
- Urban areas are the forefront & Smart City development has been identified as key in responding to these societal challenges (Appio, Lima, & Paroutis, 2019; Mora, Deakin, & Reid, 2019a; Mora, Appio, Foss, Arellano-Gault, & Zhang, 2020)
- **Smart city** transitions are **long-term urban innovation processes** that **aim to leverage digital technologies to improve the socioeconomic and ecological conditions of urban settings** (Mora et al., 2021). These innovation processes unfold gradually through a multitude of complementary **short-to medium-term smart city projects** (Bjørner, 2021).

STARTING POINT ...

- Smart City initiatives relies on collaborative governance and innovations models (Mora et al., 2019a; Clement et al, 2021)
- → a unique perspective to examine the interrelationships between technological and social innovation, sustainability, and urban development
- Although smart cities have recently attracted growing attention within organization studies, there is a conspicuous disconnect between smart city, urban development, organizational and innovation literatures (Mora et al, 2021, 2023)
- In particular, we see opportunity for organizational research to unpack the dynamics of diverse stakeholders – public institutions, private enterprises, citizens’ associations – collaborating in smart city initiatives (and how this influence community engagement – next paper)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

How do multiple and diverse stakeholders collaborate over time in a smart city initiative?

LITERATURE REVIEW (TBC)

- For solving complex social problems, multi-stakeholders' collaborations are key at the various stages of the innovation process, from the identification the problem, ideation, implementation to scale up (Fayard, 2023)
- The various stakeholders will enlighten the process through different perspectives/ adopt **complementary (sometimes opposite) institutional logics** and will contribute to different aspects (implementation, financing, envisioning...) what is essential for these complex, social problems
- BUT as they have fundamentally **different (sometimes opposite) interests/logics/temporalities**, conflicts/tensions/trade offs often appear during development of the project and may derail the collaboration

LITERATURE REVIEW (TBC)

- Very limited previous research on multi-stakeholders' collaborations in Smart City
 - Zuzul (2019, AMJ) – failure of two smart city projects using a cognitive representation/ boundary objects lens
 - **Dolmans et al (2023, OS) – a dynamic perspective on collaborative innovation in a smart city**

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

How do multiple and diverse stakeholders collaborate over time in a smart city initiative?

Said differently, based on previous literature, we would like to contribute to the following question :

How can multiple/diverse stakeholders pass (or not) over “conflicting”/“opposite” institutional logics/temporal horizons/etc when developing a smart city initiative ?

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS THEORY

- Institutional theory serves to explain that situated actors operate within a so-called institutional framework of rules, norms, knowledge and sedimented discourses (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008)
- In the context of collaborating for innovation, the logics maintained by the various actors involved are often incompatible, which causes trade-offs, conflicts and tensions (Bryson et al., 2006; Mair et al., 2015).
- In a Smart City initiatives, this implies that:
 - **Private actors** need to go beyond their **corporate logic of creating economic value** by developing technological solutions that also create societal value (Kivleniece & Quélin, 2012; Rangan et al., 2006; Venkataraman, Vermeulen, Raaijmakers, & Mair, 2016).
 - **Public actors** can no longer exclusively draw on their **social logic, focusing on public goods and social welfare**, as they need to give private actors access to a broader set of resources (Mahoney et al., 2009).

RESEARCH SETTING

- Smart City Initiative in Europe, in an urban area that is positioned in the international smart city panorama (annual smart city summit event, multiple smart city initiatives, “smart city” city branding)
- Funded by a European grant (time horizon : 36 months – Final event: April 2024)
- Based on a collaboration between seven (eight) partners
 - a foundation (linked to the university)
 - a university
 - the city council
 - an environmental municipal agency
 - a climate change consultant (“orchestrator”)
 - a biofuel producer
 - a multinational in sustainable management of waste, water and energy
 - (an international partner in waste management solutions)

RESEARCH SETTING

- Self-described as a **Smart City Private and Public Collaboration for PEOPLE** (--> initial research objective !!)
- Ambition : **influencing people and all stakeholders in daily practices towards carbon neutrality**
 - several sub-projects in the field of
 - smart and sustainable energy
 - smart and sustainable waste
 - sustainable mobility
 - community

RESEARCH METHOD

- Case Study of one Smart City initiative in Europe
- Data collection (from June 2023 to April 2024)
 - 15 semi-structured interviews with all the stakeholders (+/- 150 hours)
 - Focus group with community members
 - Several participant observations (partners' meeting + events)
 - Document analysis/archival data (official documents + messages on social media, blog posts, etc)

- Data analysis

Systematic analysis of the data → emerging themes

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Initiative initiated by the university
 - They identify the European grant as an “opportunity” to formalize and amplify their previous initiatives/collaborations/network
 - The foundation was the official holder of the project
- Motivations (??)
 - Municipality = data management (provide data, process data, access data)
 - University = reinforce its sustainability strategy, a possible “*umbrella for all its “sustainability” activities*”
 - Private companies = their businesses / engaging with other stakeholders and the community to expand their business
 - Consultant = orchestrator

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Insitutional logics
 - Municipality – public sector logics?? University ??

In line with some findings from Dolmans et al (2023) : *“Our model explains how and why actors, involved in innovation projects, may veer away from their organization’s logics, given certain contextual conditions, to follow such logics more closely as those conditions change”*

- Interactions between stakeholders – no sign of tensions/conflicts/trade-offs
 - *“We had biweekly project meetings. This contributed to people eventually establishing strong relationships, meaning that if at the beginning we were all strangers and no one knew each other, the fact that we have been seeing each other every 15 days since April 2021 ...”*
 - *“There were never moments of tension between the different partners, even when [a partner originally planned who abandoned the initiative early on for a reason outside the scope of the initiative] left, it was explained. Therefore, it was always very collaborative from everyone to find solutions”*

PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Why do we observe any tensions/conflicts/trade offs during this 36-month Smart City initiative development ?

- Highly-formalized collaboration in a pre-determined time-period (and based on a strong consensus?), identified as a joint opportunity (European funding)
→ during this period, smooth collaboration? → And after????

- And/Or is this initiative, simply, an umbrella for single innovation projects??

“Each of the activities is more related to each specific entity”

- Or is this context specific ?
 - Clear (and internationally re-known) positioning on Smart City for years
 - Networking

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND
SUGGESTIONS 😊**



SOME REFERENCES

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DOLMANS ET AL (2023)

- *Actors frequently opt out of collaborations long before the contracts end.*
- *Key issues often arise from disparities in organizational settings and institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) such as differences in goals, preferences and ways of organizing between the public and private sector actors involved (Mahoney, McGahan, & Pitelis, 2009; Quélin, Kivleniece, & Lazzarini, 2017; Rangan, Samii, & Van Wassenhove, 2006)*
- *Here, our model explains how and why actors, involved in innovation projects, may veer away from their organization's logics, given certain contextual conditions, to follow such logics more closely as those conditions change.*