

Minutes of the virtual conference

Summary

Research project: Smart Governance for Sustainable Cities

Date: 10 March 2015 between 13.00-18.00 (CET)

1. Program

- **Introduction**
- **Historical outlook on developments of smart governance**
 - **City of Utrecht**
 - **City of Curitiba**
 - **City of Glasgow**
- **Closing**

1.1 Introduction

By Albert Meijer on Smart Governance (wherein the major findings of the literature review will be discussed)

Today is the first of three conferences that are planned during the research, where we will be learning from each other's background, institutional setting, problems, solutions and experiments regarding smart governance issues.

1.1.1 Objectives of today:

- To get to know each other
- To learn from smart governance practices in each other's city contexts'
- To facilitate learning between academics and practitioners; identify sharing learning objectives
- To create support and enthusiasm for the project

1.1.2 Defining smart governance and sustainability

Key questions that will be answered in the literature review and a preview of the article and its key findings:

1. What is smart governance?

A lot of discussion about what the concept of smart government entails. Up till recently both academics and practitioners have strongly focused on technology. The focus in this project is not so much on the government as a user of the smart technologies but on citizens' role in the production of sustainable cities. Our research enhances thus the social dimension of smart governance. This leads to four core elements of the definition of smart governance in this research:

- New technologies
- Citizen participation
- Coproduction
- Sustainability

This is a bottom-up perspective on smart governance, where the basic idea is that enhanced collaboration between citizens and various other stakeholders and governments will improve the sustainability of cities.

2. What is sustainable city?

People, profit planet. Sustainability in this project is not focusing on a co2 neutral city, or a green city, but also on a sustainable profit model. This means that there is enough employment, and businesses can continue to function in a stable economic system. People should have a good level of living, they should have opportunities to develop themselves further. Three policy domains that are important to sustainable cities are highlighted in this research:

- Infrastructure and the built environment,
- Economies and livelihoods,
- Poverty, equality and vulnerability

3. What are the relations between the cities and the smart governance for sustainable cities?

In the literature, people report huge expectations of smart cities. We do not believe that solutions that work in Utrecht will have the same effects in other urban areas., The context matters. Institutional, geographical, cultural conditions in different cities influences how successful mechanisms of collaborative governance contributes to a sustainable city.

New technologies are promising, but they need to be embedded in social practices. The researchers therefore aim to produce insight into what works under which conditions, to facilitate learning processes between the three cities.

1.2 Historical outlook on development regarding ‘smart governance’:

The three cities present what has happened up till now and what is going on regarding “smart governance”, sustainable development, the use of ICT for advancing societal engagement and sustainability.

1.2.1 City of Utrecht

- 1. General overview: By Ms. Brigitte Hulscher, Programme manager Smart Cities, Marketing & Digital Innovation Spatial and Economic Development:**

Purpose of Utrecht: smart, healthy, green and connected.

- 2. Introducing 2 specific projects / issues:**

a) Ringpark in Dichterswijk: By Mr. Loog Landaal, District advisor Southwest

In the Dichterswijk neighbourhood, three citizens, who are also landscape architects, initiated a project to connect fragmented green spaces. The Municipality of Utrecht has stepped into the project development by providing moral, organizational and financial support – which is quite unique. The project participants use new social media, and other technologies to realize their plans. In the meantime a large public support from the neighbourhood inhabitants has been acquired.

b) The digital divide in Utrecht. By: Ms. Danielle Fiolet, Head of Research Department

There is a digital divide in Utrecht, between young and old people but also between lower educated young people. Digital skills that are required to make useful is a more complex concept than we first thought, it includes for example also strategic skills. Because sustainable cities are inclusive cities, this makes it important to pay attention to the digital skills of people.

- 3. Expectations: What do we wish to learn from the research? By Ms. Muriël Pels, Advisor European Co-operation, EU funding strategies**

Towards a knowledge agenda:

1. What are the differences between offline and online citizen engagement?
2. What are the critical (success) factors for citizen engagement enabled by ICTs? What is the role of local government in this?
3. What does this mean for capacity building in the organization?

Second agenda, is a process agenda :

1. From interpretation of citizen-generated data to assessment of citizen-generated data?
2. From municipality created solutions to demand-based solutions?
3. From no unless...to yes provided that.. in use of ICTs for citizen engagement?

1.2.2 City of Curitiba

Three examples from different domains:

1. Introduction to the city of Curitiba: By Sergio Povoá Pires, Chief Executive of the Institute for Research and Urban Planning of Curitiba
Sustainability and participation are two of the main axes of the major of Curitiba. There are many institutions in our subjects and Curitiba has some characteristics that are common to Latin American populations.

One case refers to the social equipment for self-managed temporary housing. Right now 40 males are living there. New social technologies are used to support the homeless population in the city of Curitiba. But how?

2. Initiatives in the environmental area. By: Renato Eufenio Lima, Secretary of the Environment

- Tools to face flooding: parks, natural lakes that serve as small dams for storm water), biodiversity and water quality improvement.
- Pluvio meters and risk maps: Alert system in cooperation with federal government. Provide four levels of alert and take the appropriated response for the event. Developed risk maps in order to facilitate the response and structural measures to distribute risk process.
- Meetings for climate change: participation of citizens and academia. Starting as a big meeting, that leads to smaller meetings.
- Community waste management facilitates the participating of people in waste management. Access to the waste stations is done with a digital card. The people that are more collaborative, using the stations, receive tickets to go to the theatre, music shows, cultural activities of the city.

1. Initiatives in urban planning : By Paolo Roberto Miranda, Municipality of Curitiba Secretariat of Information and Technology

- Bicycle mobility plan: a program developing with the Netherlands, working together with the association of bike users.
- The Young Urbanist: The idea is to provide and give kids the possibility to discuss the city. What are elements of the city they would like to have?

1.2.3 City of Glasgow

Presentation by prof. William Webster

Glasgow won 24 million pound from a future cities competition, funded by Innovative UK. They focus on how technology enables innovation.

Smart city projects in the UK lead by Glasgow City Council, with the purpose of offering better public services. Focus of Glasgow was to spent the money on smart solutions in: energy, health, transport, local services and public safety.

A range of the technological developments of Glasgow Future City

- Technology driven. Driven by technological availabilities.
 - City observatory
 - One-stop show
 - Range of matching new 'apps' that manage information flows. For example real-time traffic flows, real-time bus and train punctuality, hospital waiting times and air quality. But also CCTV about integrated systems and analytical software to identify and prevent crime

Concluding:

The project recognized that the technologies are only useful if they are used by citizens. The project is in a period of assessment and evaluation now, which may be interesting also for the SmartGov project.

2. Closing

Reflection on expectations, ambitions and future questions for the project by Ank, Marie and Douglas.

2.1 Reflections dr. Ank Michels

1. Important to identify different forms of engagement and ICT use in these processes. The evaluation of the impacts for sustainable development is extremely important.. What works, in what context, and why?

2. Context is very important as we could learn the differences from the city-presentations.
3. Co-operation. Sharing knowledge between and within the cities is crucial.
4. Shared ambitions: : The research project should have a strong practical focus so that practitioners can learn for their daily and strategic activities. What is the role of local government and how to best use ICT to engage citizens? What are new forms of civic engagement?

Three research questions:

1. The challenge is to bring together different examples of technologies, and their impact on citizens' engagement in sustainable urban development.
 - a. We should focus more on different forms of citizen engagement. In the Glasgow case it is primarily about information sharing. In Curitiba it is about consultation as well as deliberation processes.. Utrecht has presented citizen-driven bottom up initiatives.
2. Digital skills. We saw there is a digital divide in Utrecht. In Curitiba not many people seem to have access – this is an interesting contextual factor. But it also raises questions about democracy and inclusion – who takes part, who benefits? What is good for citizens? These are more theoretical questions which we could hopefully answer through this project. Another question related to this – how does ICT relate to privacy issues?
3. . Role of government. How should you enhance the use of ICT in engaging citizens, what should be the role of government in doing that? There are various development phases in collaboration. Is it about organization, facilitation, or should the government only wait and see what happens?

2.2 Reflections prof. Maria Alexandra Cunha

I would like to raise a couple of issues that we should think about in our research:

1. Coproduction needs to be enhanced through participation and engagement
2. NGO participation in smart cities
3. Integrating initiatives, various agencies in the city (these are now mostly fragmented)
4. Evaluation of smart cities – which methodologies to apply?
 - a. How are ICTs helping citizens?

Remark by a colleague: For the social condominiums ICT helps very little. Historical technological difficulties, technological and organizational integration is a key problem that means that very little support is provided for social issues. Furthermore, due to disinformation decision-making for the social domain has many challenges. Although we have a good ICT support for receiving demands from the citizens. We from the government have invented many new methods to work with and

include the population. For instance for the design of policies and measurements we work together with homeless people and/or their leaders – so we are very close to this disadvantaged community.

2.3 Reflections prof. Douglas Robertson

We see differences in synergies. The cities are all interested in new technologies but they have a very different history. The differences between Brazil and Europe, Glasgow and Utrecht make the project much stronger. We see issues of inequality at different levels, different structures of local government and the different notions of how citizens are engaged within the deliberative services in different cities (e.g. in the Glasgow case urban planning includes local and national governments. But this could rather not be called planning but allocating resources. The involvement of citizens is very limited)

The differences in the institutional governmental as well as political contexts are remarkable (e.g. the Netherlands has a more compromise-based corporative decision-making through most policy domains while the UK has a more privatized environment).

These facets of deviation will be an important consideration in our investigation

Regarding issues around coproduction – what is the notion of democracy and accountability, how do we understand inclusion? We observe how poorer areas get more deteriorated while other neighborhoods get more innovative initiatives and urban improvements.

What do we try to achieve through our research? This should not be about the application and not something illusionary, abstract expectations.

Finally, how do the regimes that we set up, in local government change the cultures of our citizens? If the technology is held by those with power, this will mean outcomes are influenced by their interests. This will be something significant to our project to keep in mind as well.

2.4 Final reflections, prof. Albert Meijer

We learned today there are:

- Differences and similarities between the cities
- Citizen engagement : broad variations which should be unpack during the study.
- Different issues of sustainability, although relevant to all
- We observe various challenges in the three cities but at the same time there are recurring themes (such as poverty, climate change etc.)

- Infrastructural legacy of technology is important to future development. The implementation based on citizens' demands should get much more attention.
- Context should be taken into account: the diverging economic, historical, political circumstances are influential as we noted through the day.
- Young people are present in all our presentations, an interesting theme to be developed in the research
- Experiments are an important element in all our projects: how can these experiments be scaled to become relevant to the entire city?

In the coming months the following steps will be taken:

- Identifying common themes, including a pragmatic approach for assessing them
- Identifying specific cases within the cities
- To carry out and finalize the literature review on the base of which we will develop a context-sensitive theory and operational framework to apply for the empirical research.
- Next year we will move on from our ambitions to discuss the first results of the case studies. We will be able to draw some lessons- to what extent can these lessons be implemented in other cities? How can we compare the findings throughout the various urban locations and how can we conceptualize them?

Let's keep in contact, among the cities but also with the practitioners.

Thank you all – we will continue to learn from each other online. Visit the project website, follow us on twitter and connect your colleagues to the project.

See you next year!

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