

"Organizing for a Sustainable Future: Responsibility, Renewal and Resistance"

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Smart and Livable Cities (2):

Urban Governance, Management, and Leadership

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Summary: Cities have taken up the challenge of governing, managing and leading their cities to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 11).

“Smart Cities” have been introduced almost as a panacea in urban planning and development. Studies have related them to political, social, and economic agendas prioritizing innovation-driven economies. However, only few connect them with “open-data” policies to address the most urgent problems and challenges in terms of new business models and participatory citizenship of “Livable Cities”.

The subtheme is aiming at investigating the potentials and limitations of urban governance, management, and leadership when it comes leading towards a healthier, more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable agenda and future. Hence we invite contributions investigating the role of all types of stakeholders (private, public, NGOs, partnerships, co-operations, movements – and citizens) when it comes to developing and enacting smart and livable cities in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Smart cities; Livable cities; Governance; Management; Leadership; SDGs; Co-creation

Leading Cities and City Leaders, [<http://www.c40.org/>, <http://www.uclg.org/>, <http://www.iclei.org/>, <http://www.worldmayorscouncil.org/>], especially “global cities” (Sassen²2001), have taken up the challenge formulated by the World Economic Forum: “what if cities would rule the world?” [<https://agenda.weforum.org/2014/01/cities-ruled-world>], when it comes to governing, managing and leading their cities and co-creating livable cities to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially “Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” [<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>].

The discourse about how to rule, manage, govern and lead a city can be divided into two competing discourse streams. The first one (about social and technical engineering and Smart Cities) is very prominent in the mass media discourse and in PR / PA of tech companies and in tech communities. Whereas the second one (about participation, involvement, co-creation, co-housing and Livable Cities) is mostly enacted in social media platforms, virtual communities, but also in local or regional social and cultural initiatives, movements, and in new forms of urban governance of municipal administrations. Both streams struggle for getting a voice in the discourses as well as in mediascapes.

Technology, planning, and urban architecture have always been intertwined in allowing and limiting both what can be controlled and what self-organizes and emerges in cities. Urban and regional planning are more and more enabled and constrained by information technologies and the narratives they become wrapped in. “Smart cities” and “Livable cities” make no exception since at least two distinct narratives polarize opinions and debates: one is derived from Spatial Data Infrastructures; the other emerges from participation and user-generated content. “Smart cities” seem to be leaning toward the former narrative. However, grass-root movements can be quite forceful in using alternative narratives and in deploying technologies and open data accordingly – moving it towards the “livable cities” and hereby the latter narrative.

Smart Cities, Internet of Things, Big Data and Cloud Computing have been introduced almost as panaceas in urban planning and development (for shortcomings of this perspective see Kitchin’s critical studies; e.g. Kitchin 2014). Studies have related them to political, social and economic agendas that prioritize innovation-driven economies. However, only few of the studies connect them with “open-data” policies (Mulder 2015) – in order to address the most urgent problems and challenges in terms of envisioning and implementing new business models and participatory citizenship. Also on this field, cities have taken the lead (Taylor 2005). They are becoming leading living laboratories towards sustainability, social innovation, and inclusion via participative, open and accountable spaces (Tsakarestou & Pogner 2014).

Cities as ecosystems (Schaffers et al. 2011) are emerging and developing in the context of global economy and new forms of organizing “without organizations”, i.e. in self-organized networks (Shirky 2011). In these self-organized networks, new forms of power relations and leadership, including Circuits of Power (Clegg 2014), Distributed Leadership (Bolden 2011) and Relational Leadership (Uhl-Bien & Ospina 2012) emerge. Distributed Leadership closely relates to concepts such as shared, collective, collaborative and democratic leadership: “ ‘leadership’ is conceived of as a collective social process emerging through the interactions of multiple actors (Uhl-Bien 2006)” (Bolden 2011: 251). Urban development and its management are closely related to an understanding of leadership as social processes emerging through the interactions of multiple actors. Relational leadership and distributed leadership open up for self-organizing, thereby creating new opportunities in the way citizens are empowered when designing and co-creating their cities of today and tomorrow. In parallel, there is a search for new public governance and public innovation approaches assembled by co-creative practices (Sørensen & Torfing 2018, Torfing & Triantafillou, 2016). These approaches are often inspired by leadership concepts where governance is seen as some kind of participatory democracy in democratic governance networks (Sørensen & Torfing, 2008).

Urban research has also investigated avenues through which culture and creativity can raise the imaginative capability of citizens and harness opportunities tied to culture-driven growth. The success of co-creating urban strategies within and between the public sector, institutions, city administrations, political bodies, business, the civil society and not least the citizens are dependent on a synthesis of bottom-up and top-down activities in “action nets” (Czarniawska 2014). This calls for a holistic approach that has the potential to foster involvement, to embrace both diversity and equality in communities and cities, and to cross institutional borders, e.g. by linking arts and other creative initiatives to co-creation (Wåhlin et al. 2016).

This subtheme continues the conversation started in Tallinn with our subtheme “Smart and Livable cities” at the EGOS Colloquium 2018. It is aiming at investigating the affordances, potentials, and limitations of urban governance when it comes to the responsibility of cities as organizations in leading towards a healthier, more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable agenda, which improves strategies (Brandtner et al. 2017) for the future. Hence we invite empirical papers as well theoretical papers investigating the role of all types of stakeholders (private, public, NGOs, partnerships, co-operations, movements – and citizens) when it comes to developing and enacting smart and livable cities in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Papers may address, but are not limited to, research on the following themes and topics:

- Urban governance, management, leadership and strategy in discourse, narration and action
- Lessons from New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG)
- Cities and institutions, meta-organizations and inter-organizational systems and networks
- Public and private innovation in the city
- Urban architecture, design, planning, co-creation and innovation
- Co-organizing and co-creating urban space, co-producing city development
- Values in urban environments
- The role of urban social movements.

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