

IRSPM Conference 2023 – Abstract proposal

P29 – SIG Agile and digital transformation in the public sector

*Public policies for Smart cities or Smart territories :
Rethinking local governance to maximize public value creation*

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Abstract :

In 2021, more than 200 territories in France had launched Smart City or Smart Territory projects (Data Publica and KPMG 2021, p17), a particularly elaborated form of digital transformation for local authorities, combining digitalization trajectories and the will to create value on a territorial scale. The Smart City concept is indeed regularly associated with an ambition to create multidimensional value (Csukas and Szabo 2021). In this sense, several authors have proposed to address it from the perspective of public value theory (Cosgrave et al. 2014; Bolivar 2019; Chatfield et al. 2019).

We fit into this research agenda. Our questioning thus revolves around the following research question : **How does the proactive and open governance which characterize Smart City or Smart Territory policies (Frucquet et al. 2021) improve public value creation at the local level ?**

To answer this question, we undertook a qualitative exploratory longitudinal study including two French local authorities with ambitious Smart City and Smart Territory projects in terms of public value creation. Our research was conducted using an analytical framework based on a detailed analysis of the literature on the relationship between Smart City, governance and public value. In particular, we draw on the work of Harrison et al (2012) and their notion of « value generators », as well as on the identification of the government characteristics of smart governance proposed by

Przebylovicz and Cunha (2021). Our model then attempts to understand, for each action and activity that make up the public policies of Smart City or Smart Territory, the type of public value created, for the benefit of which stakeholders. In this framework, governance is positioned as a moderating variable that positively contributes to value-generating mechanisms such as efficiency, effectiveness, intrinsic enhancements and transparency for proactive governance, and to transparency as well, but especially to participation and collaboration, for open governance.

Our results confirm and clarify the role of local governance in the process of public value creation. We highlight the contribution of proactive governance to the creation of the first five types of public value identified by Harrison et al. (2012) : economic, political, social, strategic and quality of life. Open governance also contributes to these types of values, but more particularly to the last two types : ideological and stewardship. However, its implementation remains limited by technical and organizational factors that do not, at this stage, allow it to reach the level desired by local actors. Moreover, the implementation of proactive governance mobilizes such a high level of resources and induces such organizational transformations that it is difficult for local governments to jointly lead this double dynamic of proactivity and openness to maximize the creation of public value. This observation is amplified, in one of the two local authorities studied, by the importance of managing the contractual relationship with the group of companies in charge of implementing the project. In our opinion, there is therefore a risk that the promise associated with the Smart City concept of a renewed relationship between local governments and their environment of legitimacy and support will not be fulfilled, and that the dynamics of public value creation will therefore remain partial.