

Smart communities inside local governments: a pie in the sky?

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5 Smart Communities inside Local Governments: a Pie in the Sky?

6

7 Purpose - Via embracing the idea that who directly experiences a problem is keener to develop  
8 more innovative solutions, local governments have started to engage smart communities in the  
9 innovation of public services' delivery. Even if the meaning of "smart community" generally refers  
10 to the community participation in the innovation of public services for urban living, local  
11 governments have predominantly stimulated the participation of their citizens. But innovative ideas  
12 can potentially spring out also from the insiders. This paper aims to find the managerial and  
13 technological issues that public managers have to consider when planning an internal smart  
14 community initiative.

15 Methodology - For this purpose, the authors analyse the case study of the Municipality of Turin that  
16 developed a participatory smart community project, named Innova.TO, through the theoretical lens  
17 of sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005; Weick, 1979).

18 Findings - Results show that there are three main aspects to be considered when implementing  
19 smart community initiatives in local governments.

20 Originality - Even if there is the potential, the engagement of public employees in a smart  
21 community of innovators is not straightforward and several complexities may challenge its success.

22 Otherwise, real-life examples and empirical studies are still episodic. As a consequence, if it is  
23 concretely possible to build a smart community of innovators inside a local government still  
24 remains a question to which this paper aims to response.

25 Keywords: smart communities, public sector, innovation, smart city

26 Research paper

## 27        **1. Introduction**

28        Researchers and professionals have increasingly addressed their interest on information and  
29        communication technologies (ICT) for smart cities (Neirotti et al., 2014; Ricciardi and Za, 2014;  
30        Hernandez-Muñoz et al., 2011). A smart city can be defined as a platform, which fosters collective  
31        (local) intelligence of all affected stakeholders, businesses, government, universities, citizens,  
32        enabled by the use of technology (Breuer et al., 2014; Walravens, 2013). The smart city debate is  
33        gradually evolving from hardware infrastructures and technology towards softer aspects like city  
34        management and innovation of administrative processes (Nam and Pardo, 2011). Indeed, managing  
35        city innovation is challenging because of the radical changes to which cities are exposed, such as  
36        immigration, urbanization, and environment that require the extensive involvement of local  
37        communities of users and citizens (Brorstrom, 2015; Gontar et al., 2015; Huston et al., 2015;  
38        Wiseman et al., 2014; Caragliu et al., 2011; Nam and Pardo, 2011; Toppeta, 2010). This is usually  
39        labelled as the “Smart Communities” (SCC) innovation process. SCC has the purpose of focusing  
40        on the development of a smart city that would include investments beyond pure ICT and that would  
41        especially put emphasis on the role of the human capital and people’s participation in the processes  
42        of administration and service delivery’s innovation (Caragliu et al., 2011; Toppeta, 2010).

43        However, while great attention has been paid to SCC of citizens that co-create and co-participate to  
44        the smartening of their cities, little work has explored how innovation could spring out from the  
45        ideas of the insiders and the contributions of the city workers. What is a great potential in theory, is  
46        mined by the complexity of the contest in practice. Indeed, local governments are usually resistant  
47        to innovation processes and public employees are discouraged by bureaucratic procedures. Thus,  
48        the phenomenon of bottom-up innovation in public administrations remains understudied and the  
49        innovation process itself is usually considered as a black-box, which needs to be opened and studied  
50        in order to understand the main enablers and inhibitors of its implementation (Brorstrom, 2015;  
51        Piening, 2011; Fagerberg, 2005). Therefore, the question of whether it is possible to build in

52 practice a SCC of innovators inside a local government is still without an answer (Stewart, 2014;  
53 Fagerberg, 2005).

54 As an attempt to answering this question, a single rich case study of bottom-up innovation in a local  
55 public government is presented in this paper via application of the lens of sensemaking (Weick,  
56 1979). The case is about an initiative, a.k.a. Innova.TO, launched by the municipal government of  
57 Turin, a city in the North-West of Italy, to improve the administrative processes via engaging the  
58 innovative and smart contributions of the city employees. In particular, the paper presents the  
59 approach used in Innova.TO, and identifies the key milestones of the process in order to highlight  
60 the managerial and technological issues that public managers have to take into account when  
61 planning to create a smart community of innovators inside their organizations.

62 The remaining part of this paper is organized into seven sections. After introducing the notion of  
63 SCC (Section II), the authors present the theoretical framework used to analyse the case study  
64 (Section III). Then, the methodology is given (Section IV). In the following sections, authors  
65 present the main results (Section V), discussions (Section VI) and the final conclusions (Section  
66 VII).

## 67 **2. Smart Communities in urban contexts**

68 Cities are in a permanent flux of continuous change: they reinvent themselves overtime to advance  
69 their economic, social and technological performance and improve their competitiveness to manage  
70 the ongoing urban changes (Wiseman et al., 2014; Komninos et al., 2011). Besides the negative  
71 externalities of the “urban century” (Huston et al., 2015; Caragliu et al., 2011; Toppeta 2010), the  
72 urban agglomeration phenomenon has also opened opportunities to increase the efficiency of our  
73 cities. Indeed, cities are increasingly competing for their economic and social success, becoming the  
74 place of social and technological innovation (De Marco et al., 2016; Caragliu et al., 2015): they  
75 must create the enabling factors, innovate their administration’s processes and their service delivery

76 if they want to be sustainable (Brorstrom, 2015). The operating environment of the public sector is  
77 fundamentally changing also thanks to technological assets and infrastructures that empower more  
78 informed, connected, and participatory people in the innovation journey (Katsigiannis et al., 2015;  
79 Chourabi et al., 2012). Under this perspective, people are not simply individuals, but are considered  
80 in their potential as SCC that participate and contribute to improve the quality of living within a city  
81 (Chourabi et al., 2012). The term SCC indicates a group of people, such as citizens, employees, or  
82 students that collaborate to co-create economic and social value, support the decision-making of the  
83 government or local authorities, and leverage ICTs to accomplish common goals (Zurita et al.,  
84 2015). In other words, SCC can also be defined as the one that learns fast and well, in the sense that  
85 it makes the highest and best use of intellectual, social, financial, and instrumental resources  
86 (Paquet, 2001). In the SCC concept, the human dimension is pinpointed as a crucial driver for the  
87 city's development and management, making it fair, inclusive, efficient and sustainable  
88 (Bencardino and Greco, 2014; Cocchia, 2014).

89 Even if civil servants can be unprepared for this bottom-up approach (Hollands, 2015; Bergvall-  
90 Kareborn et al., 2009) co-operation between public sectors, enterprises, universities and citizens  
91 should be preferred instead of individualism (Cocchia, 2014) because improvements and changes  
92 come especially from people who use and live the city (Breuer et al., 2014). Through the users'  
93 involvement, the process of innovation becomes collaborative; the technical, the social and the  
94 subjective issues are no more considered as disconnected, but as interdependent (Breuer et al.,  
95 2014). Thus, the SCC concept can be assumed as people-centred: cities are not merely the source of  
96 data that are gathered and analysed to monitor and control, but the place where communities can co-  
97 create opportunities and leverage bottom-up innovation (Michelucci et al., 2016; Breuer et al.,  
98 2014; Komminos, 2013; Leydesdorff and Deakin, 2011).

99 ICTs are, of course, important, but more as an enabling technologies able to answer to social needs  
100 (Neirotti et al., 2014; Caragliu et al., 2011; Toppeta, 2010), while the human capital should be again

101 at the centre (Caragliu et al., 2015). According to this point of view that is contrary to the first and  
102 well established ideas that ICTs make cities automatically smarter, the smartness relies especially  
103 on the involvement and participation of the people (Brorstrom, 2015; Hollands, 2015; Huston et al.,  
104 2015; Wiseman et al., 2014; Walravens, 2013; Caragliu et al., 2011; Nam and Pardo, 2011;  
105 Toppeta, 2010). With the diffusion of the SCC debate, by leveraging on enabling technologies local  
106 governments have opened their processes of innovation and decision-making to citizens'  
107 participation. However, it seems that they have forgotten the potential of public employees' ideas  
108 when it comes to innovating their everyday routines. If, on the one hand, studies about citizenship  
109 participation into the government life feed the scientific debates (Garnier and Kudo, 2016; Viitanen  
110 et al., 2015; Nanni and Mazzini, 2014), on the other hand the accreditation of a smart community  
111 inside the local government has not received the deserved attention.

### 112 **3. Theoretical framework: sensemaking of innovation in local governments**

113 When organizations experience a change in their operative environment and have to face new  
114 challenges, the sensemaking process can help in generating the right intuitions and transforming its  
115 culture and strategies (Madsbjerg and Rasmussen, 2014). With this nonlinear process, the problem  
116 is re-thought in the form of a phenomenon, with the objective to catch the complex, and usually  
117 unaware, interactions between people and their surrounding environment (Madsbjerg and  
118 Rasmussen, 2014). Sensemaking is a diagnostic process to construct plausible interpretations of a  
119 complex, organizational context. The sensemaking process is characterized by three main phases,  
120 namely: enactment, selection, and retention (Weick et al., 2005; Weick, 1979). In the enactment  
121 phase, individuals realize that something is changing in the surrounding environment and in their  
122 flow of experience and identify the problem (Madsbjerg and Rasmussen, 2014; Rasmussen et al.,  
123 2001). In relation to local governments, even if the cities' competition may favour the birth of  
124 innovative ideas to make the public sector more efficient (Kornberger, 2010), innovations remain  
125 circumscribed and do not propagate (Jappinen, 2015). Indeed, public administrations are change

126 resistant, tricked with bureaucracy and risk averse, while innovation is risky and requires flexibility  
127 (Brorstrom, 2015; Morgan, 2006; Du Gay, 2000).

128 In the selection phase, people rationalize the number of plausible interpretations (Weick et al.,  
129 2005; Rasmussen et al., 2001). Mendes et al. (2012) identifies structural and agency factors that  
130 make local governments innovation resilient. Structural barriers are due to the context: the elevated  
131 level of bureaucracy makes the public context highly formalized, while innovation requires  
132 dynamism to spread (Mendes et al., 2012); the lack of finance and cultural resistance hinder the  
133 adoption of new procedures and discourages the promotion of innovation from the inside (Mendes  
134 et al., 2012; Koch and Hauknes, 2005; Mulgan and Albury, 2003); finally, innovation is considered  
135 a no-one's job in the public administration and rarely departments have a person in charge of  
136 innovation (Mulgan, 2007a). Even when it occurs, radical innovations cut across departments'  
137 boundaries, while high invisible walls still isolate them and prevent the coalescence of a smart  
138 community of innovators (Mulgan, 2007b). Agency barriers are linked to the characteristics of  
139 individuals involved in the innovation process: people attracted to work in a bureaucratic  
140 environment tend to be less creative and risk-adverse (Mendes et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2008;  
141 Mulgan, 2007a; Koch and Hauknes, 2005) and are discouraged by an environment that dissuades  
142 risk-taking and overweighs and amplifies even small failures (Mendes et al., 2012; Clark et al.,  
143 2008; Mulgan, 2007a; Mulgan and Albury, 2003); moreover, public employees have a conservative  
144 attitude and nurture a certain resistance to change the way in which they have worked for years  
145 (Mendes et al., 2012; Koch and Hauknes, 2005).

146 Finally, at the retention phase, the outcomes of the process are evaluated, elaborated and organized  
147 to interpreter what happened (Weick et al., 2005). In local governments, innovation is usually  
148 initiated as a top-down process, with changes in governance and regulations enacted by managers  
149 and policy-makers (Windrum, 2008), and even if co-participation with citizens seems an affirming  
150 paradigm (Lappas et al., 2015; Pankowska, 2015; Burton and Hilton, 2014), rarely bottom-up

151 process are originated by employees. On the contrary, the literature has acknowledged the value of  
152 involving employees in the innovation process, because they better know everyday difficulties,  
153 communicate with the final users and understand their wants (Hasu et al., 2015; Fuglsang and  
154 Sundbo, 2005). Thus, employees can be more than single workers, but a smart community of people  
155 that join their creativity, experience and problem-solving skills and drive innovation in the public  
156 administration (Hasu et al., 2015). However, even if employees have a better understanding of the  
157 problems of their work, seldom they are asked to become a smart community and think about how  
158 to improve their work (Saari et al., 2015; Hasu et al., 2011). When they are asked so, the innovation  
159 path is not straightforward.

#### 160 **4. Methodology**

161 The research is based on a single case-study analysis (Yin, 1984). This approach was chosen to  
162 collect rich and longitudinal data following the process of development of a smart community in the  
163 Municipality of Turin. Rich data was necessary to identify the fundamental steps of the process and  
164 the main managerial and technological issues to be considered when planning such an initiative.  
165 The case Innova.TO was selected because it can be considered as a pioneering example of SCC  
166 building process internationally.

##### 167 4.1 Case setting: Turin as a Smart City and the Innova.TO project

168 For decades fed by the automobile industry (Crivello, 2015), Turin's economy entered a period of  
169 decline at the end of the last century due to the delocalisation of the car manufacturing facilities. In  
170 order to limit the social and economic consequences, such as the increase of the public debt and the  
171 unemployment rate, over the last decades the city's administration implemented a strategic plan to  
172 convert Turin into a technological and cultural city (Crivello, 2015; Vanolo, 2015). However, the  
173 financial crisis of 2008 hit again the Turin's economy (Vanolo, 2015). Frightened by the risk to  
174 remain tricked in the stagnation, in 2011 the public administration launched the Torino Smart City

175 Foundation, in order to reinforce the brand of Turin as a technological and intelligent city. One year  
176 later, the city launched the Torino Social Innovation strategy, with the objective of stimulating the  
177 creation and aggregation of SCCs. Since then, the city government has been undertaking several  
178 initiatives to support local technological and social innovation, promoting networks, workshops,  
179 partnerships with local organizations and also opening the Centre for Open Innovation to involve  
180 the Turin's citizenship into the process.

181 Within this context, in 2013 two public employees, called "the promoters" in the following, had the  
182 idea to develop a competition "in order to encourage all public employees of the Turin's  
183 municipality to propose innovative projects and improve the administration's performances through  
184 the reduction of waste and resources' valorisation" (Municipal Act number 2013-04814/068). As a  
185 result of this idea, the Innova.TO (a name that merges the words "Innovation" and "TOrino")  
186 initiative was launched as a pioneering case of a virtuous competition that, with exclusion of  
187 executives and directors, incentivizes the public employees to co-innovate and collaboratively share  
188 their ideas and projects.

189 All employees could propose innovative projects in several fields of public service delivery: costs  
190 rationalization, procedures' simplification, data sharing, improvement of the service level,  
191 efficiency of territorial management and control systems, improvement of the working  
192 environment. The basic idea was to stimulate bottom-up innovation through the aggregation of  
193 people that co-participate to enhance the level of service of their work. Indeed, projects could be  
194 submitted by a team of proponents, belonging to different public departments and could suggest  
195 improvements in both the primary or secondary functions of the city administration, could be  
196 functional or inter-functional, and had to satisfy some basic requirements: no additional costs,  
197 technical feasibility in the short-medium period, tangible results, developable by usage of internal  
198 personnel, and environmentally-friendly. An ICT collaborative platform was developed and entirely  
199 dedicated to Innova.TO: employees could search for allies, interact, ask questions, share their

200 proposals, gather documents and information about the competition, and submit their proposals.  
201 4.000 employees interacted with the platform, and 71 projects were submitted by 111 employees. A  
202 panel of experts evaluated them and the first 20 winning projects were awarded during a public  
203 ceremony led by the Major of the city.

#### 204 4.2 Data collection and analysis

205 The research was designed in two phases. Observations and data collection took three years: from  
206 2013 to 2014 (Phase 1) and in 2015 (Phase 2). During the first phase, the authors were observers to  
207 the process of transforming the idea of the promoters into Innova.TO and of the award ceremony.  
208 They did not get the access to the selection of the winning projects. During this phase, the authors  
209 were invited to project meetings and public presentations of Innova.TO. They also took advantage  
210 of informal occasions to talk with the promoters and obtain information about the Innova.TO's  
211 evolution, as well as with public employees to investigate their interest in participating to  
212 Innova.TO and their ideas. Fifteen employees accepted to be informally interviewed. The answers  
213 given by the limited, though sufficiently informative sample (Bertaux, 1981) were then triangulated  
214 with participant observations and document analysis for the sake of a rigorous and robust  
215 qualitative analysis (Guest et al., 2006). Indeed, during this first phase, employees were quite  
216 sceptical to show their intention, in order to benefit of the anonymity. During the award ceremony  
217 of Innova.TO the authors also discussed with two of the panel's members. They got access to public  
218 and confidential documents, press releases and employees' applications. During the observations,  
219 they took field notes that were then expanded to formalize the gathered information.

220 During the second phase, the authors assessed the outcome of the project one year after the award  
221 ceremony, through semi-structured interviews to 20 employees and the two promoters. Based on the  
222 concept of saturation by Glaser and Strauss (1967), 20 interviews allowed to capture the different  
223 participant's perceptions, while avoiding any repetitiveness. The interviewees were selected among  
224 both awarded and non-awarded participants of Innova.TO and from different departments. The

225 authors used semi-structured interviews to ensure for consistency in the structure, while maintaining  
226 flexibility. The civil servants were asked to illustrate their ideas, to explain their motivations to  
227 apply for Innova.TO, their points of view about how Innova.TO was organized, to describe their  
228 project team and expose their expectations about the project.

229 In addition, with separate interviews, given their role as proponents of the initiative, the two  
230 promoters were asked about the origin of their idea and its approval, motivations that encouraged or  
231 discouraged their colleagues to apply, strengths, limitations, organizational issues, expectations, and  
232 their feedback with Innova.TO's results. All interviews were recorded.

233 Data gathered during the two phases were progressively analysed. The analysis consisted of a close  
234 reading through documents, the chronological narrative of the events was written and patterns of  
235 managerial and technological schemas were searched under the theoretical concepts presented in  
236 the previous sections (Brorstrom, 2015).

## 237 **5. Results**

238 The results are presented in the following according to the specified phases of sensemaking:  
239 enactment, selection and retention (Weick et al., 2005; Weick, 1979).

### 240 5.1 Enactment

241 The promoters had the idea of Innova.TO in 2013 when, during their attendance to an executive  
242 master about innovation and technology, they asked themselves how to bring people back at the  
243 centre of the innovation journey. The answer was “working on smart communities”, as one of them  
244 illustrates, “stimulating the sense of belonging and participation and transforming the employees in  
245 the protagonists of innovation in their administrations”. According to them, the local government  
246 was doing a lot to support the city's innovation, through policy making, partnerships and smart  
247 procurement processes, while doing nothing to innovate the city in its internal administrative  
248 routines. As public employees, they felt they were usually evaluated for their performances,

249 conformation to their directors' expectations and for their doing exactly what they were asked to do.  
250 On the contrary, they could be more than simple instruments of the public management, they could  
251 be a vector of change, a community of innovators. "Turin Municipality: 10.500 public employees –  
252 10.500 potential innovators" became the slogan to promote Innova.TO, with the aim to enhance all  
253 competences and intelligences of the Turin public administration. Even if the promoters' directors  
254 seemed to appreciate the project, one year later Innova.TO was still an unexplored idea. The  
255 promoters realized they had to find the endorsement of both the executives and political boards in  
256 order to strengthen the idea and put it forward. Specifically, a visionary council member remained  
257 particularly impressed and decided to commit with Innova.TO: "To be a smart city means also  
258 reforming the management and organizational processes of the public administration, embracing the  
259 intuitions of our employees, their know-how and competences". Also the Major seemed  
260 enthusiastic: "This is a new integrated vision of our administration, which promotes the knowledge  
261 sharing and collaborative organization". Contemporary, the promoters started to illustrate their idea  
262 during public sector meetings and exhibitions, in order to raise their proof of concept. The idea was  
263 transformed into a project in the Municipal Act number 2013-04814/068, approved by the  
264 municipal council the 15 of October 2014, but no budget was allocated for the implementation.

## 265 5.2 Selection

266 As soon as after the act was billed, a technical committee, which included the two promoters,  
267 started to organize the competition. Transparency and credibility were the two main concerns  
268 because a common thinking during that period was that "Innova.TO is simply a marketing  
269 calculation of the politicians that have embodied the idea". The technical committee found some  
270 expedients to signal the reliability of the competition: first, the evaluation panel was composed of  
271 experts internal and external to the Municipality; secondly, it was given the possibility to send the  
272 applications anonymously, separated from the name of the applicants; third, executives were  
273 excluded from the competition, to stimulate bottom-up innovation and do not make employees and

274 middle managers feel discouraged; fourth, it dedicated an online platform to the project, to let  
275 employees interact, share ideas, submit their applications and let the smart community coalesce;  
276 finally, it established public-private partnerships with private sponsors. The private sponsorships  
277 were of help for several reasons. Indeed, Innova.TO was a zero-budget project and private sponsors  
278 offered amazing prizes to award the winners, such as electric bicycles, smartphones, online  
279 newspaper subscriptions, carsharing and bikesharing season tickets, for a total value of 12.000  
280 euros. The prizes served also as an incentive to encourage employees' participation. Moreover, the  
281 involvement of private partners increased the external and internal recognition of the project and its  
282 consensus. The call for ideas was launched early in April 2014 and remained opened for 45 days,  
283 during which employees interacted on the online platform and submitted their applications. The  
284 vast majority of employees decided not to apply because still sceptical, as shown by some common  
285 comments: "Bureaucracy will never let our ideas exist in practice", "What do they want by me? I  
286 have worked here for years and nobody asked me anything". The jury classified the received  
287 applications into seven categories, namely: improvement of transparency and accessibility to  
288 services (19), organizational development (16), operative efficiency (14), the delivery of new  
289 services (7), environment and energy efficiency (7), employees wellbeing (5), paperless and ICT  
290 solutions (3). The best 20 applications were awarded during a public ceremony chaired by the  
291 Major who declared that only the first 10 of them would have been implemented.

### 292 5.3 Retemption

293 One year after the award ceremony, no applications had entered the development phase. However,  
294 during the months following the ceremony, Innova.TO was presented as a success initiative to  
295 newspapers and even The Guardian titled "Devolution, the Italian-style – the cities forging their  
296 own futures" (The Guardian, 30 July 2014). Innova.TO was introduced as a triumph during public  
297 presentations, European meetings, public administration forums and the winners were invited to tell  
298 their experience. While the promoters, politics and executives were saying "Yes, we did!",

299 employees common though was “A year is passed and nothing has changed”. Some interviewed  
300 individuals said that the completely exclusion of executives from competition made them hostile  
301 instead of favouring a collective change. Moreover, no feedbacks were given about the progress of  
302 the winner ideas, nor employees, one year later, knew if their ideas would have never been realized.  
303 The vast majority of the few participants did not shared their ideas on the platform and applied  
304 alone to the competition, as well emerged from one interviewee: “My project was a secret, I  
305 couldn’t share it with anybody else, neither with the end-users of my idea. I gave it for granted that  
306 they would have accepted my innovation, because it really improves the flow of their work”. While  
307 externally strong, internal communication was weak as well as interactions among employees and  
308 departments. After the ceremony, the winners were not kept in touch, as an interviewee said: “I  
309 candidate myself to give a help during the implementation of our ideas, but they didn’t give me the  
310 opportunity”. Another employee said: “When we stopped boosting the realization of our ideas, the  
311 technical committee stopped to move forward”. Conversely the two proponents affirmed: “The  
312 winners should prompt the development of their projects, but are too shy and prefer to give up and  
313 don’t ask us to move forward”. However, everybody agreed that Innova.TO was a signal that  
314 something was changing in the mind-set of the public administration. For the first time, the idea that  
315 also who is at the bottom of the organization can improve or change things was felt as an  
316 opportunity by many.

## 317 **6. Discussion**

318 Through application of the framework of sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005; Weick, 1979) to a case  
319 study of bottom-up innovation in a public organization, this paper presents the managerial and  
320 technological issues to consider when it comes to build a smart community of innovators inside  
321 local governments. The study is based on a single case study, using interviews, documental analysis  
322 and participant observations, in order to gather rich and longitudinal data. The results point out that  
323 during the enactment of the surrounding environment, the phase in which individuals become aware

324 of the problem, it is hard to find the person in charge of pushing the project forward through the  
325 bureaucratic steps of the public administration process (Jappinen, 2015; Mulgan, 2007a). Even if  
326 directors seemed to share the vision, they felt the task was out of their perimeter and the proposal  
327 remained stuck for as long as one year. The executives' and political consensus was shaken by the  
328 endorsement of an innovation champion, member of the city council, that enabled the transition  
329 from idea to practice, unlocking the bureaucratic interruption and political opposition. Moreover,  
330 the involvement of the external community of experts enabled the internal community's credibility  
331 and transparency and made it more difficult to abandon the idea.

332 In the selection phase, when people advance their possible interpretations and solutions to the  
333 problem, the bureaucratic environment largely discouraged employees from responding to the call  
334 for proposals, who preferred to stay in their anonymity and everyday duties (Jappinen, 2015;  
335 Mendes et al., 2012; Koch and Hauknes, 2005; Mulgan and Albury, 2003). The ICT collaborative  
336 platform revealed to be not sufficient per se to coalesce a community of insider innovators, without  
337 activities of community building and awareness rising. Indeed, the participation was below  
338 expectations and also the interactions between departments quietly rare. The promoters seemed to  
339 have forgotten that Innova.TO was born during a conversation about the relationship between  
340 human capital and innovation, ending up with an online platform to which they delegated the  
341 management of the entire initiative. Interestingly, the exclusion of some categories of employees  
342 from the community had a double effect: while, on the one hand, it enabled bottom-up participation,  
343 on the other it increased the antagonism of the excluded people, with significant delay during the  
344 innovation's development.

345 In the redemption phase, when the outcomes are evaluated to interpret what happened, the case  
346 study revealed that Innova.TO was evaluated as a good tool to collect ideas, but nobody was put in  
347 charge of managing the implementation of the winning projects and to stimulate the interactions  
348 among the innovators (Saari et al., 2015; Mendes et al., 2012; Mulgan, 2007a). As somebody said,

349 “Innova.TO lets ideas come up. But now we need Realizza.TO<sup>1</sup> to make smart communities  
350 happen”.

351 Briefly, three main managerial and technological aspects revealed to be important for the  
352 coalescence of a SCC inside the local government under the lens. First, the case study showed the  
353 importance of interacting and collaborating with external recognised communities to increase the  
354 internal awareness and legitimation. Second, Innova.TO illustrates the importance of including the  
355 stakeholders all along the process, since the beginning phases, in order to avoid antagonisms inside  
356 the community. Finally, ICT is an enabling technology to facilitate the bottom-up merging of the  
357 community, but the process runs aground if nobody governs it and stimulates interactions and  
358 reactions.

## 359 **7. Conclusion**

360 Some considerations can be drawn inherent with the results of the case study. The single case study  
361 methodology is usually questioned as it does not allow a statistical generalization of results or a  
362 formulation of a general understanding (Yin, 2003). Accordingly, this paper is explorative in nature  
363 and its objective is to provide interesting insights to examine a phenomenon that is still little studied  
364 (Jappinen, 2015; Stewart, 2014). In particular, it aims to inform both scholars and public managers  
365 on the issues that have to be managed to avoid that smart communities in the public sector remain a  
366 pie in the sky. However, the focus on one single case study over a three-years period permitted the  
367 collection of rich and longitudinal data for a deep analysis of the phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The  
368 case Innova.TO showed several difficulties of implementation, and through the analysis of these  
369 failures the study showed three main factors that are important when building a smart community of  
370 innovators inside a local government, namely: the relationship between internal and external  
371 communities, the resistance to change, and the role of technology as an enabler of change. They  
372 imply some relevant conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> The name merges the words “Realization” and “TOrino” in the Italian language

373 From a practical point of view, three main issues can be brought. First, it becomes hard for SCC  
374 managers to abandon an ongoing innovation process whenever internal and external consensus is  
375 reached, the endorsement of innovation champions is obtained and a formal processes is enacted.  
376 The case showed that the interaction with external communities increases the internal legitimacy.  
377 Under this perspective, both internal and external communities become interdependent (Breuer et  
378 al., 20014) and co-participation is not only the end, but also the mean through which public  
379 managers enforce the SCC coalesce. The endorsement by the external community of experts  
380 brought additional resources, enlarged the focus of the project, and avoided it fell in the anecdotal  
381 situation of being self-referential overlooking external ideas.

382 Second, change resistance and hostility inside the community arise when the stakeholders are not  
383 fully engaged in the innovation path, because they feel excluded and a common vision of the way  
384 forward is not shared. The Innova.TO case showed that in a routine environment, the SCC  
385 managers have to balance the trade-off between stimulating employees' participation and preserve  
386 the commitment of who has the decisional power, or, in other word, between creativity and rigidity,  
387 or innovation remains circumscribed and its potential does not propagate (Jappinen, 2015).

388 Third, in a resistant and highly-formalized context such as local governments (Brorstrom, 2015;  
389 Morgan, 2006) the help of technology can lean the process if this has a clear governance that  
390 prompts commitment to the initiative, support and sustain the community, and stimulate a  
391 participatory approach. Indeed, according to results, face-to-face contacts and interactions are still  
392 important to encourage people to co-participate and co-create value and it creates dynamism in the  
393 culture resistance that discourages innovation (Mendes et al., 2012; Koch and Huaknes, 2005;  
394 Mulgan and Albury, 2003).

395 From a theoretical point of view, two main considerations emerge. First, scholars generally refer to  
396 SCC as to people that support the decision-making process of the government and contribute to  
397 improve urban living (Zurita et al., 2015; Chourabi et al., 2012). However, Innova.TO is an

398 example that different SCC can coexist in an urban context. They may co-operate to leverage the  
399 collective intelligence of the city. They interact and empower each other to accomplish the  
400 community's objectives while improving the quality of living in the city. In Innova.TO, this  
401 collaboration allowed to legitimate the project and aspired to advance the level of service offered to  
402 citizens. Second, usually scholars agree around the idea that ICTs enable the union of SCC  
403 (Katsigiannis et al., 2015; Chourabi et al., 2012), but the case study highlights that the rigidity of  
404 the context can affect this potential and transform ICT in an inhibitor. Thus, it opens the road to  
405 research on how to stimulate interactions and reactions to build the community when the rigidity of  
406 the context constrains the process and invisible walls isolate departments (Mendes et al., 2012;  
407 Clarck et al. 2008; Mulgan, 2007a; Koch and Hauknes, 2005), otherwise the ICT potential remain  
408 unexploited.

409 This paper is an attempt to report an interesting experience of bottom-up innovation in public  
410 organizations. Future research is directed towards extending observations and case study analyses in  
411 other local governments and various field of applications beyond the SCC domain. Also, the  
412 authors are committed to transform the results of these studies and associated lessons learnt as best  
413 practice guidelines for those local governments that might be willing to undertake similar processes  
414 in the future.

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