

EMERGING GOVERNANCE MODELS IN THE INNOVATION OF URBAN SERVICES: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The proposed paper considers that cities are facing challenges to maintain urban infrastructure and establish efficient, open and participative innovation processes to jointly create the applications and services able to respond to citizens' needs and to develop more inclusive and democratic urban processes. It accounts urban services as crucial factors for the innovation of urban governance. In particular, it focuses on public-place keeping services as paradigmatic examples of an active participation of citizens and different kind of institutions to the maintenance, creation and re-activation of public space within an innovation perspective. These public-place keeping services are potentials activators of the so-called 4P model (Private, Public, People Partnerships). In fact during the last decades it was suggested that it is possible to establish public-private partnerships (PPPs) for services supply so integrating the potentials of both the sides public and private (Osborne and Brown, 2011a). Nevertheless, many criticisms have been raised against PPPs that are charged to not be a real occasion of cooperation (Jessop, 2002; Miraftab, 2004). Some scholars begin to consider the potentials of new possible models for the management of public services. This paper, analysing two case studies from two different European cities (Athens and Rotterdam), will focus on which can be the role of the public sector in defining/envisioning possible futures in a 4Ps perspective.

1. Public services innovation

The nature of public services, and of public service organizations, has changed over the past thirty years and is still changing. This phenomenon is caused by the mutation of political and socio-ecological contexts in which they develop. These changes can be required by a sudden unforeseen crises, which can be environmental (i.e. earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.) health related (as the Ebola cases in Africa in 2014) or a man-made crises (i.e. arsons) (Osborne and Brown, 2005). They can also derive from the change of the local and national political system and of the actors involved in public services provision, and from the growing scarcity of natural and economic resources and also from the changing in the relationship between the different actors involved and between all these factors (Ostrom and Cox, 2010), as for example the changing of global economic factors, government funding and economic structures (Harding, 1994) innovation funnel.

These changes are forcing and challenging cities to maintain and upgrade urban infrastructures and establish efficient, effective, open and participative innovation processes to jointly create the innovative applications and services able to respond to citizens' needs. In particular in this time of growing complexity, due to the crisis of representative democracy, the globalization of culture and economy, the rising cost of energy, the financial crisis and the subsequent economic crisis, the problem of fragmentation (diversity), the ageing of the population, the increasing interest (at all scales from local to global) in environmental issues (Albrechts, 2013).

During the last thirty years the partnership approach received a widespread support from across the political agenda across the local and the supra-national level (McQuaid, 2000), aiming to answer to the new need of people caused from the changes of the different context and environment. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have been proposed as a key tool of policy across the world (Osborne and Brown,

2011b; Osborne and Murray, 2000; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2008). Nevertheless, many criticisms have been raised against PPPs that are charged to not be a real occasion of cooperation (Jessop, 2002; Mirafab, 2004). Some scholars begin to consider the potentials of new possible models for the management of public services. The literature is trying to show how it is possible to develop a new partnership involving the public and the private sector and people (Public, Private, People partnerships, the 4P model) (Kuronen et al., 2010; Majamaa, 2008).

Starting from the evidence that public-place-keeping services are showing up as real occasion for the innovation of urban services and the related governance structure (Hou, 2010), this paper will analyse (in section 2) the Public-Private Partnership model (3Ps) versus the Public-Private-People partnerships (4Ps), which will be better present in this section; then (in section 3) it will describe the concept of public-place-keeping services and (in section 4) analyse two European cases as examples of the dynamic arising in public-place-keeping services, analysing them on three characteristics of the partnerships model. Finally, (in section 5) it will discuss some specific governance aspects of 4Ps arising from the examples shown, and (in section 6) it will present some conclusions and implications.

2. Emerging governance models

2.1. *The partnership paradigm 3Ps versus 4Ps model*

The supply of public services is associated with two types of agents: public or private. As highlighted before, during the last thirty years the partnership approach were believed to embody many advantages which are coincident with the presently acknowledged main criteria for sustainability – it requires consideration of multiple stakeholders' interests, it implies a long term perspective based on common goals, and can accommodate a wide range of conflicting perspectives (Leach et al., 1994). The partnership approach stimulated also new reflections about innovation and causes a new wave of state reforms, starting from economic liberalization, then more focused on administrative reforms and now searching for new more collaborative models.

Going beyond the PPPs model, which started to be questioned, for example Hood (Hood, 1991) states that the advent they has changed little and all the old problem and weakness remained, some scholars begin to consider the potentials of new possible models for the management of public services. What is considered actually is a third tier, the people, regarding the fact that citizens can contribute significantly to service delivery (Ahmed and Ali, 2006). A new vision of governance is emerging that includes the three main sectors (government, the private sector and civil society), a user-centered model that emphasizes process between many actors with different and sometimes conflicting priorities, looking at the way in which the empowerment of people can be achieved in emerging governance system. Far from the urban literature, this model arose with the Toyota 4P model (Dahlgaard-Park and Dahlgaard, 2007; Dahlgaard-Park, S. M. Dahlgaard, 1999; Nonaka et al., 2008). After that, Majamaa et al. (Majamaa et al., 2008) have proposed the model of *Public-Private-People Partnership* (4Ps) for public service provision involving real estate development. In this perspective, the 4Ps model would support active end-user participation in the production of public services, approaching the idea of *co-production* (Leadbeater, 2004).

Against the concept of 3Ps, which represented a formal and well established agreement between the parties, the 4Ps model represents a more informal way to cooperate between the stakeholders (Concilio and Molinari, 2014). In this model of delivery the emphasis is on horizontal relationships between partners, rather than hieratical structures of planning and delivery that are found in state-centred or market-centred delivery. Usually, the stakeholders involved have a direct interest in the quality of the spaces and related services (Carmona et al., 2008).

In a 4P setting there is a fluid networking between partners, which are not expressing the same role over time, their role may change also in relation to their knowledge and capacity in relation to the different challenges that they should face up. People would have, besides the formal channels of local democracy towards the public body, also informal channels to influence the public and the private provider, which, in turn, would be encouraged to develop its service provision further - and even to create additional third-party services, in response to the end-users' further needs on real estate and facility development, exceeding the actual legal requirements on the public service in question. Indeed, citizens are becoming more and more important as *city makers*: they, act at the micro-scale, do things to achieve urban changes and transformation and, at the same time, they are acquiring a more important role.

3. Public Place Keeping Services

3.1. The concept of Public-Place-Keeping Services

The concept of *Place-Keeping* was coined by Wild (Wild et al., 2008) and it is related to what happens just after high quality places have been created. This means maintaining and enhancing the qualities and benefits of places through long-term management (Dempsey and Burton, 2012). In this perspective, many aspects of places influence the maintenance of them. It is not only related to physical or ecological aspects, but also to social and economic issues (Ostrom and Cox, 2010). Hence, *Place-Keeping* it is described as 'long-term and responsive management, which retains and enhances the social-environmental and economic quality and benefits which a place brings now and in the future' (Dempsey et al., 2014, p. 14).

Place-Keeping it is obviously affected by the different contexts within which it occurs. These dissimilarities implies that not only the physical structure or subject can change, but also that places are affected by a variety of uses and users that will ask for different requirements. This paper considers *Place-keeping* as a process characterized by maintenance, recovery and restoration of the existing environment, but also by a regularly day-to-day capacity of use of the place (i.e. daily use, social, cultural and special events, etc.). This means that also the frequency and quality of the use of that place are significant.

Different kind of *public-place keeping* exists. This paper refers to processes taking place at a micro-scale like a pocket parks, small shared gardens, small abandoned plot. Considering that many experiences of experimenting new models for the implementation and management of the urban public services are related with the management of urban green or abandoned areas and public space, due to the fact that in many cities open space and green areas maintenance is challenged by the economic crises so asking for innovation not only in the way maintenance is carried out but also in the service conceptual framework¹.

On one hand green areas represent a very traditional urban public service that a municipality is asked to supply and maintain to assure a high quality of life in the city, health, security, a good quality of the urban environment, sports, and *loisir*, but also good urban ecosystem to address some of the most important challenges such as climate change, water and food security. On the other, abandoned areas are spreading around many cities due to the contextual changes related to the political, environmental, social and economical issues.

They are one of the most evident examples of the people's reaction against the ineffectiveness of the

public service management²; they are considered catalysts of growing civic activism. There, new forms of dialogue between citizens and institutions are developed and experimented, while also shaping new governance frameworks (Concilio and Molinari, 2014). These *public-place keeping* services can represent a long-term management way to focus on public open space maintenance. Restoring abandoned or not well-maintained green areas, where *place keeping* doesn't occur, can represent a considerable economic and social cost.

These kinds of place-keeping actions are carrying innovation dynamics, which are leading to the creation of something new, which is not necessarily a new product, but they produce a process that becomes accepted in an organization or in the society (National Audit Office, 2006).

3.2. Four lenses on Public-Place Keeping Services

The innovation of urban services that take place within socio-ecological system, such as cities, is the results of complex dynamics, actions, socio-spatial system of resources, actors, and context issues. These different dynamics are affected, fostered or impeded by the related governance system. In this paper we want to look at some initiatives, proposed as example of innovation of urban services, which are affecting through three specific lenses, chosen within a wide range of possibilities (Ostrom and Cox, 2010):

1. The promoter: These are the actors that activate the emergence of Public-Place-keeping initiative at the beginning (citizens, which can be part of the local community or external promoters, civil servants, department of the public administration, a private foundation, a public body, etc.)
2. The participants: They represent the different stakeholders taking part in such experiences (local community members, citizens groups, sponsors, civil servants, etc.)
3. The level of formality of the agreement (formal, informal, etc.)

These lenses could be useful in understanding and interpreting the intrinsic dynamic of service innovation and the related governance structure.

4. Two examples of Public-Place keeping services

4.1. Pocket park in Victoria, Athens

The creation of a pocket park in the Victoria area of Athens in Victoria wants to answer to the lack of green areas and playground around the city of Athens, matching with that the problem of vacant and abandoned spaces. It was proposed and realized by the local community guided and engaged by *Atenistas*³, an open and active community of citizens of Athens. They are a group, not a legal body or

² See for example:

- Salem Public Spaces / Salem-MA (USA)
- Isola Pepe Verde / Milan (IT)
- BOST / Bankside-London (UK) (8)

³ Their beliefs are concentrated in areas of interest such as (i) Free access to pedestrian streets, pavements and squares, (ii) Cleanliness of the city, (iii) Due process of law, as many of problems in Athens come from the non-law enforcement, (iv) Promotion of tourism (since tourism is one of the biggest industries of Athens) since they have the ambition to make the city of Athens friendlier, with more services to tourists, (v) Promotion of public transportation and bicycles and the creation of bicycle lanes and pedestrians streets, and (vi) Raising money for good causes through the sponsoring of the city by private companies and the citizens (<http://atenistas.org>).

a political party, who wants to stimulate the creative participation of people to the issues that are afflicting Athens. The group was born in 2010, triggered by the action of one professional. Although many emergent initiatives that are arising around the city in the last years (since 2008), *Atenistas* are the best known, they are seen as a blue print for social movements in Greece (Malkoutzis, 2013). Several activists participate to their actions, but the core group remained the original one; they are the supervisors, guided by one leader, who has the ultimate control over all actions of the group. The small active group had since the beginning a distinct graphic identity and mainly use Facebook and Twitter to advertise their actions, events and gatherings. This kind of participation is free and informal anyone can participate without giving personal data despite an email in order to be part of the newsletter list and to participate to their action.



Figure 1. An image of the Pocket Park in Victoria

In 2011 two *Atenistas*' activists discovered a big, fenced-in corner plot filled with garbage, embodying the ruins of a torn-down building. They started a research about the area and discovered that half of the plot belongs to the Social Insurance Institution (IKA), and the other half is private. After almost a year of consultations with the City Council, the IKA and the private owner, the demolition permission for the building was granted in April 2012, and in May the wreck was torn-down⁴, with the permission of Athens municipality that lighted the area and cleaned the plot. On Saturday June 23rd 2012 and during the following week, *Atenistas* proceeded with the final stage of the makeover (tree planting, installation of benches made of discarded pallets, path formation, litter bins positioning, etc.). After this action, the local residents had embraced the new open space had made it their own. They had adopted the trees and plants and watered them throughout the all year, and the owner of the mini market has undertaken the management of the space. One big issue remained to be solved at the end of this action: the necessity of water supply, which was still under discussion with the Athens Water Supply and Sewage Company. In May 2013, *Atenistas*'s Green Team decided to revisit the pocket park. The spot needed a second, better-designed intervention, with more plants and trees and playground gear. The new design plan enriched the space with new elements: colourful murals on the surrounding walls, new playground toys, more plants and trees, etc. Residents and kids collaborated

⁴ <http://atenistas.org/2012/06/25/feron/>

with *Atenistas* in the construction of the pocket park, painted the walls (with the help of the *Atenistas-Creativa* group) and learned how to plant flowers and herbs⁵. After this second intervention also the local primary school started to use the spot in doing their classes.

4.2. *Tuin aan de Maas, Rotterdam*

The Mullerpier area, in Delfshaven-Rotterdam, was the scene of a big intervention of urban development. The first block of houses was completed in 2002, but only one unity was ready. The rest of the area was left as a large plot of sand and weeds. The Public Administration publicly declared that that area would not be build immediately, as promised before, but just after some years. Hence the residents of the area decided to act in order to improve the quality of the public space around their homes and to have a place where share time and chats between neighbours.

In 2004, a group of four or five people decided to organise a restoring action in the area, taking advantage from the public initiative ‘Groene Duimen’, which gave a small amount of funds to the citizens who wanted to activate a new agricultural initiative in the city. To obtain this funds in an easier way, the group decided to become an official foundation. They started to restore a small part of the land around their houses and grow small plants and vegetables. The initiatives obtained a great success and started to involve more people from the neighbourhood. After some time, the first initiative was destroyed by construction machinery that had to restart the official works of urban development. After this episode, the works stopped again. The reaction of the residents was immediate, they didn’t like that their work was destroyed without having nothing in charge. For this reason, during 2008, the initial group decided to make a new garden in the same area, the “Pilot garden” to see if there was the possibility to make it better than the first one. From this test, the experience was completely successful and by 2010 the *Tuin aan de Maas* was completely shaped as a residents’ initiative and in 2012 they decided to double the area dedicated to the garden creating a trees and flower garden.



Figure 2. An image of the *Tuin aan de Maas*

⁵ <http://atenistas.org/2013/05/28/feronfylis/>

After the first experience of destruction of the area, since the agreement between the residents' group and the city council was informal (the group just asked and obtained the permission to take the area sending an e-mail), the Foundation of Tuin aan de Maas decided to ask for a more clear agreement between the parts. The residents were aware of the temporary conditions of the pocket park; they didn't want a formal contract with the City Council, but they wanted to be informed before on the decisions about the area. They didn't ask to have the responsibility of the area, but they wanted to have the time to move the plants, the vegetables and their things from the garden and, just in case, to replace them somewhere else.

The core of the active residents' group still consist of four or five people, who are part of the foundation, but they have involved forty or fifty people who are working at the garden and use to enjoy it. They did a good publicity to their initiative, using Internet and social media and they obtained funding for their activity also from private funds, obtaining prices as social initiative. They were able also to attract people from the other neighbourhood of Rotterdam.

4.3. Two experiences: similarities and differences

These two experiences cannot describe the whole complexity of what is happening around the two European cities, chosen as case study. But they still stimulate some reflection about the peculiarities of the characteristic of these *Public-Place-Keeping Services*.

Table 1. Analysis of the Public-Place-Keeping Services initiatives

Initiative	Promoter	Participants	Agreement
<i>Pocket Park in Victoria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15/20 members of the promoter group • 30/40 members of the situated community • Private companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal
<i>Tuin aan de Maas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/5 core members • 40/50 residents • Private foundations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal

Analysing these two cases on these components helps in develop some considerations about them and capture some differences and similarities. These Public-Place-Keeping initiatives are related to small abandoned plot of the city. The first (*Victoria*) is situated in a central area of the city of Athens, the second one (*Tuin aan de Maas*) is next to a neighbourhood of new and not completed development in Rotterdam.

The promoter of the initiatives in the Rotterdam case was part of the situated community, who wanted to improve the quality of the space around the area and to better know the neighbours. In this case, being part of the community was a point of strength from which start to make the area liveable for all. In the Athens case the project came from an outsider promoter, a group, who experienced the same problem of abandonment and scarcity of quality of the public space around the whole city. The residents accepted the project easily. They found it as good opportunity to restore the area and to re-appropriate of the area in order to have a spot to use and to share moments and chats between neighbours.

The ownership of the land can represent a big issue for public-place-keeping services. In the examples presented above we can notice that in the first case the process of activation of the initiative was stuck

at the beginning waiting for the permission of each stakeholders involved. In the second case just an e-mail was necessary to start the process. Since, the property was unitary.

The participants in Athens were just “outsider” at the beginning but this issue was not an obstacle; it helped the local community to become aware of the problem. In this case, it turned in an opportunity, it was the occasion for activating the citizens’ reaction in maintain the area. An issue arise when the time to restore and renovate the design of the area occurs. The local community didn’t have the knowledge to do it by itself and for that reason involved again the promoter group in order to restore it. These shared-working days worked as practical and learning workshop. In *Tuin aan de Maas* the commitment of the local community was high since the beginning, but it spread around in a different way. The foundation was able to involve many people from the area and from other neighbourhoods around, but the real commitment for the place keeping was still in the hand of the core group (only 4-5 people). They tried to involve other participants in the foundation but most of the people like to enjoy the place without having stable duties on it. In this case the design and maintenance of the pocket-park was totally realised with the internal shared knowledge of the group.

The level of formality of the agreement it is different in the two cases. It is possible to classify the *Victoria* case as semi-informal. Since the permissions were asked at the beginning of the process, but they were given by e-mail without the necessity to sign contracts between the stakeholders involved. In Rotterdam the agreement was more or less the same at the beginning of the story; then, after the “destruction event” occurred, a contract was necessary to ensure the needs of the foundation. It was not a necessity for the City Council to have a contract and fix the responsibility on the area, but it was a strong need expressed by the community, since the situation of instability that they were compelled to live.

5. Governance models arising in public-place keeping services

The two case studies presented above are an example of innovation of public-place-keeping services. They represent an innovative way for long-term management of these small plots, transforming them in pocket-parks aiming to enhance the quality of life of local communities. Analysing the promoters, the ownerships, the actors and the level of formality of each agreement helps in understanding the specific governance structure that allows such organisation.

In fact, these kind of public-place-keeping services are calling for innovative governance structure. As highlighted before, more than one solution for the management of the public space exists. Between public, private and public-private partnerships these services are calling for more fluid, dynamic networking and alliances, such as Public-Private-People Partnerships (4Ps) (Concilio and Molinari, 2014), where trust and collaborative values assume a contractual power among participants (Blomqvist, 2002). The different kind of agreements informal or temporary allows a fluid exchange of flows, dynamics and knowledge between participants and stakeholders.

These informal agreements between the different actors involved foster a continuous testing and learning of innovative solutions. The role of each actor is not defined before through a contract, but is dynamic, temporary and –probably- the best for that solution in that specific moment, but it can not always be the best solution ever. Such changes in the roles allow and force the stakeholder to a continuous dialogue to find solutions to different issues through a top-down and bottom-up interaction as an external and internal exchange of values. For example in the *Victoria* case the involvement of the City Council helped the initiative starting with a top-down decision to allow these actors to act in that place, but

These continuous exchanges of ideas and knowledge trigger the building of trust and confidence, within the community and between the community and institutions. Indeed, it is also evident that sometime the use of formal agreement (see the *Tuin aan de Maas* case), acting as forms of reciprocal commitments, help in building trusts between the parts and in clarifying the intents.

The governance structure, which is emerging is open, involves public, private and people stakeholders. The people involved in such initiatives may change over time, although some heroes and leader can be identified in each story. Groups are not pre-defined as stable, they are open in growing in numbers and in changing as people. In the same way public and private actors can assume different forms and responsibility each time.

5. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper contributes to the theoretical discussion on the governance models of Public-Place Keeping Services. It is possible no one-fit-all solution elitists. Along the Public-Place Keeping innovation process more than one model is necessary to answer to each innovation challenge posed by citizens' needs. It could be a combination of bottom-up or top-down initiatives and a combination of 3Ps or 4Ps partnership. Indeed it is not yet clear which governance approach will be more successful, but their applicability depends on the specific properties of the long-term problems they are intended to solve (Siebnhuner et al., 2013). In the innovation process more than one governance models can be practicable and/or necessary and they evolve from one to another not necessarily in a continuous way and related organizations can be simple or complex but are rarely stable; more often are temporary or ephemeral.

The replication or adoption of the changes related to public-place keeping it is not always a planned or intentional activity, but it is often something that can be understood better as an emergent process and practice. This does not mean that it is necessarily a bottom-up process, coming from situated people. External factors and actors can also activate a place-keeping process; it is something that happens in relation or consequently to specific circumstances.

Moreover, the increasing of the number of partners does not necessarily equate to more successful partnerships. More partners can bring added challenges for communication and coordination, and building trust between partners who are not used to working together; reconciling profit-driven motivations with users-focused ones can be an issue.

In such context, the coordination of these kinds of processes is not linear; it shifts from one stakeholder to another. These kind of environments shows up the opportunity for urban administrations and institutions to play the role of 'growers' (i.e. "capturers, ", drivers and facilitators) of scaling-up processes, of urban forces showing innovation potentials and self-organizing ability in facing socio-urban problems has been analysed through the consideration that they can capture the innovation potential intrinsic in every urban complex system to foster innovation of public services (Puerari et al., 2013). Hence, it is possible to assume that public institutions can be the crucial capturers of *innovation epiphanies* and crucial aligners of innovation forces towards creating a new perspective for the re-organisation and implementation, hopefully innovation, of public services.

Public administration should not just shift the responsibility of the provision of urban services within a urban innovation environments, but they should be able to foster the innovation epiphanies in order to capture the opportunities within them without losing the capability of doing things, but being there to help in sustain them.

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