

Paper Session

[I20] An institutional perspective on smart city experimentation: comparing institutional arrangements in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Ningbo and Songdo

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'Smart cities' has quickly taken root across the world as a new discourse for urban development in particular since 2009. Next to (re-)framing their approach to urban development to include reference to technologies such as sensors, apps and digital infrastructures as solutions to urban challenges, city authorities have started to explore the governance of smart urban development through a range of institutional arrangements. Currently little is known about these institutional arrangements and how they co-evolve with smart city experimentation. Hence, the aim of this paper is to explore and compare the institutional arrangement in four cities in Europe (Amsterdam and Hamburg) and South-East Asia (Ningbo and Songdo) and explore how these shape smart city experimentation in each city. The paper does so by describing and comparing the regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions of institutional arrangements in these four cities. The paper builds upon data collected in interviews and additional grey material, as well as long-term engagement with the cases in the context of a three-year international research project. The comparative analysis demonstrates that differences across cases can be understood as resting in spatially-specific and path-dependent institutional arrangements, with distinctive implications for the experimental style emerging in each case. The paper ends with a reflection on the usefulness of the framework for analysis of institutional analysis and urban experimentation more generally.
