Rethinking the Smartness for Sustainable Development Through the Relationship between Public and Private Actors

Authors : Selin Tosun

Abstract : The improvements in technology have started to transform the way we live, work, play, and commute in our cities. The emerging smart city understanding has been paving the way for more efficient, more useful, and more profitable cities. Smart sensors, smart lighting, smart waste, water and electricity management, smart transportation and communication systems are introduced to cities at a rapid pace. In today's world, innovation is often correlated with start-up companies and technological pioneers seeking broader economic objectives such as production and competitiveness. The government's position is primarily that of an enabler, with creativity mostly coming from the private sector. The paper argues that to achieve sustainable development, the ways in which smart and sustainable city approaches are being applied to cities need to be redefined. The research aims to address common discussions in the discourse of smart and sustainable cities criticizing the priority of lifestyle sterilization over human-centered sustainable interventions and social innovation strategies. The dichotomy between the fact that smart cities are mostly motivated by the competitive global market and the fact that the delocalization is, in fact, their biggest problem in the way of becoming authentic, sustainable cities is the main challenge that we face today. In other words, the key actors in smart cities have different and somewhat conflicting interests and demands. By reviewing the roles of the public and private actors in smart city making, the paper aspires to reconceptualize the understanding of "smartness" in achieving sustainable development in which the "smartness" is understood as a multi-layered complex phenomenon that can be channeled through different dynamics. The case cities around the world are explored and compared in terms of their technological innovations, governance and policy innovations, public-private stakeholder relationships, and the understanding of the public realm. The study aims to understand the current trends and general dynamics in the field, key issues that are being addressed, the scale that is preferred to reflect upon and the projects that are designed for the particular issues.

Keywords : smart city, sustainable development, technological innovation, social innovation