

GRASPING THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE URBAN GOVERNANCE OF SMART CITIES IN SERBIA. THE CASE OF INTERREG SMF PROJECT CLEVER

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There is global interest in the smart city, not only as an operational concept, but also as a funding mechanism of the EU Cohesion Policy, joint programs, projects and initiatives. According to the EU Commission, a smart city is a place where traditional networks and services are made more efficient with the use of digital and communication technologies, for the benefit of its inhabitants and business. Urban governance, as an instrument of integrated urban development, has an important role as a decentralization criterion in improving the smart city's performance in more developed countries and regions. At the same time, the countries of Southeast Europe that are not members of the EU (including Serbia) are lagging in this matter. Taken that the application of urban governance in the context of a smart city can be seen as a practical novelty in Serbia, this paper presents and discusses the existing state of the art in this field. The findings presented were derived from collaborative engagement within the INTERREG project CLEVER – Co-designing Smart Local Solutions for Exploiting Values and Enhancing Resilience, during 2018/2019.

Key words: urban governance, smart city, integrated urban development, CLEVER, Serbia.

INTRODUCTION

The attention to smart cities and their governance is rapidly emerging in policy formulation, resource management, practical action and academia. The fragmentation of approaches to the smart city makes for a complex debate. The concept comprises innovative solutions (and processes) based on technologies with various aspects of integrated urban development planning, including urban governance. According to Meijer and Bolivar (2016: 392), governing a smart city is about generating new forms of social collaboration through the use of information and communication technologies. In this case, the technology itself is not directed towards making a city smarter. In order to direct smart city development, there is a need for political understanding and support for enhancing individual and institutional capacities through a collaborative approach,

and a focus on the common good, as well as economic improvements. Landry (2006), for example, considers cities as a nucleus of economic development, where city politicians and administrators should not aim to solve all the problems in the city, but rather enable urban systems to engage and govern a variety of problems and produce a range of common goods. Thus, the governance of smart cities should not be observed solely as a technological issue, but a complex endeavour which involves sharing responsibilities between government institutions and all other participants in the city's development process.

Challenges in the area of urban development are numerous and related to the proliferation of international influences on local urban cultures due to the homogenization of global urbanity, pronounced inter-regional competitiveness and entrepreneurship, but also weakening of the support to cities by the state (Tasan-Kok, 2010). In order to tackle the multi-layered challenges and potentials of local environments, various joint programs, projects and initiatives in the field of integrated urban development have been generated

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and are ongoing across Europe. These programs are aligned with the priorities of EU Cohesion Policy² directed towards achieving a smart, green, connected and socially responsible Europe (goals of the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027). EU Cohesion Policy supports the development of national and local urban development strategies, since it is an instrument of integrated urban development planning directed towards enhancing administrative capacities and regional and cross-border cooperation (goal no. 5 – Europe close to its citizens). Although a number of programs for strengthening the capacities for urban governance are initiated and ongoing for EU member states, the countries of Southeast Europe that are non-EU members have had little or no experience in this field, and little or no access to funding for testing and innovation in urban development practice.

In the context of Southeast European cities, the global interest in the smart city, as both an operational concept and a funding mechanism of the EU Cohesion Policy, is often coupled with complexities of path-dependency. Although the subject of urban governance has developed into a mature academic field, Serbia can still be considered at the starting position in this matter. This is not surprising if taking into account the long-lasting role of state institutions in planning and development practice, and thus the difficulty of detaching the activities from their traditional “hosts”, and transferring both capacities and competencies to other stakeholders (thus changing existing regimes). Furthermore, the local context of Serbia is characterised by conditions of economic transition and the process of European integration, adjustments to planning in an unregulated market environment, and institutional capacities and regulations which do not follow these challenges at the same speed (Čolić, 2015). In addition, the local planning context is influenced by different internal stimuli and the embedded societal values of development actors, including policymakers and practitioners.

A number of activities to raise awareness of urban governance as an instrument of integrated urban development have been carried out in Serbia since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda – Habitat III. In line with goal no. 5 of the EU Cohesion Policy, Serbia participated in several international scientific and professional programs in the field of integrated urban development. Local integrated urban development policies were adopted in the City of Niš (2007), City of Kraljevo (2013), City of Kragujevac (2013) and City of Užice (2014). In 2019, the first national sustainable and integrated urban development policy was prepared – Sustainable Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030, hereafter SUDSRS. Besides integrating relevant thematic areas and a number of sectoral policies at different levels (supranational, national, regional, and local) through priority spatial areas of intervention, the national policy provides options for the integration of different financial resources and for establishing urban

governance regimes to facilitate the development process.

The project discussed in this paper, CLEVER (INTERREG SMF project – Co-designing Smart Local Solutions for Exploiting Values and Enhancing Resilience), is here considered as part of the effort to increase capacities in urban governance for the integrated urban development of smart cities. The project was carried out with partners from Romania, Croatia, Serbia and Italy (technical support) during 2018-2019. The project’s process allowed for the collaborative identification of dilemmas, problems and potentials in the field of urban governance and smart cities, some of which are explored in this paper.

THE ROLE OF URBAN GOVERNANCE IN THE SMART CITY APPROACH

The challenges of contemporary cities lead to fragmentation of their political, economic and social structures and the emergence of new conditions and new problems that cannot be solved solely by traditional planning and government instruments, or market instruments in and on their own (Jessop, 1998). The lack of public funds has urged cities to seek partners to achieve their goals, giving urban governance an important role in the allocation of material resources (Cars *et al.*, 2002; Hyden, 2011). Urban governance is described as a process of coordinating the decision making of different actors, social groups and institutions within a particular institutional context, whereby the goals are reached through discussion and agreement (Le Galès, 1998; DiGaetano and Strom 2003). It builds on the capacity of the local community to “unite and articulate different entities, both internally and in relation to the external environment” (Le Galès, 1998:496). Socially innovative practices in urban governance and territorial development are associated with the emergence of new institutional forms that draw on the greater involvement of actors and institutions from both the economy and civil society (Moulaert *et al.*, 2007). To enable governance to be effective, the focus is a shift to the formation of institutional and urban networks. This form of planning involves building collaborative relationships between actors to implement specific programs and establish a governance culture (Healey, 2004). Governance practices are thus enhanced by the framework of “participatory, inclusive and networked relations between socio-cultural, political and business actors” (Swyngedouw, 2005: 1995).

Besides the potentials, some of the most pertinent critiques of introducing new governance models relate to linking governance with the new public management (Sager, 2005), the dominance of certain social groups that formulate urban policies (for example economic, socio-cultural or political elites), as well as a lack of process transparency (Swyngedouw, 2005; Borraz and Le Galès, 2010; Innes *et al.*, 2010; Blanco *et al.*, 2011). In addition, the research of networks and partnerships in urban regeneration practices raises questions about the feasibility of multi-partner cooperation goals, the implications for inclusion and innovation, and whether networks can replace or operate in parallel with government arrangements (Blanco, 2013).

Together with the emergence of governance approaches

² One of the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 priority areas for directing investments (65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund) is smart Europe, through innovation, digitization, economic transformation and support for SMEs.

seeking the decentralization of decision-making processes, the smart city concept evolved as a blueprint of technological evolution in the field of planning in the early 2000s. At first, the concept was used to reflect the role of information and communication technologies to enhance planning in the area of energy use, competing land-uses and resources. According to Castelnovo *et al.* (2016: 724) most definitions of the smart city “make a direct or indirect reference to improving performance as one of the main objectives of initiatives to make cities smarter”. The performance improvement is most often directed towards the field of ICT or intelligence, infrastructure and services, the economy, mobility or the environment. Additionally, smart city definitions point out the need to tackle the performance/functioning of governance and administration, enhance the quality of life and lifestyle, and take care of society. Thus, it can be argued that in a complex metabolism of a city, the adjective “smart” often refers to the implementation of “hard”, visible infrastructure and ICT in urban development processes (and outcomes) in order to enhance the performances of a city as a whole. Besides the hard, visible and usually measurable domains of the smart city, there are soft, not always visible areas that affect the functioning of city hardware: knowledge, capacities, networks, policy innovations, cultural heritage, public participation and more (Hollands, 2008; Angelidou, 2014). Urban governance can thus be seen as a binding component between the aforementioned “hardware” and “software” of urban development.

A comparative literature review of studies suggests that operational domains of urban governance in the smart city context have developed over recent years (Castelnovo *et al.*, 2016; Meijer and Bolivar, 2016). Available research papers in the field of the smart city can be mapped through variation points according to the methodologies applied. Some of the work focuses on smart technology, people and smart collaboration, with an emphasis on process; others examine the transformative potential of urban governance, which may produce new knowledge, understandings and capacities to trigger the more efficient implementation of smart projects. Additionally, there are studies that examine smart city practices in light of power relations. In some cases, projects may obtain the label of “smart” to enhance legitimacy claims for achieving desired outcomes set by powerful decision-makers.

The above noted approaches suggest different ways of observing the concept of urban governance in relation to the smart city. In some cases, the urban governance of smart cities is considered a smart urban collaboration in a lasting transformation process. Other more conservative definitions of urban governance in the context of smart cities suggest no need for the transformation of governmental structures and processes, because smart governance is about “making right policy choices and implementing these in an effective and efficient manner” (Meijer and Bolivar, 2016:399). Although this approach to urban governance does not emphasise the need for the transformation of government structure, it suggests that the restructuring of the decision-making process in line with the principle of subsidiarity in a bottom-up fashion is necessary (Bătăgan, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

In recent years, the influence of the EU accession process holds a prominent role in introducing innovation into the planning system at all levels of decision making in Serbia. Following EU development policy, the areas of smart cities and integrated planning have aspired to become a complementary asset to existing practices. The research and testing of novel concepts in Serbian development practice are thus supported through different IPA funded projects, and among them the INTERREG SMF CLEVER project (2018-2019). This part of the paper provides an overview of the research methods employed within the project in order to distinguish the role of urban governance as an instrument of smart city development in Serbia. The results of the analysis are presented and discussed in this paper.

The CLEVER project was carried out in a consortium of Baia Mare Municipality (Romania), Development Agency North (Croatia), TRILOGIS (Italy) and the Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia (Serbia) during 2018-2019. The main aim of the project was to assist the implementation of smart urban regeneration strategies in partner cities, through a transnational framework that combines innovative participatory governance, PPP and funding tools, based on the exploitation of ICT instruments.

As a Seed Money Facility (SMF) project, the mandate of CLEVER included developing the main project for implementing sustainable urban strategies and action plans for revitalizing public space that would: 1) foster an integrated approach by developing instruments to deliver tangible investments through the horizontal, vertical and area-based integration of key actions and measures with regard to societal, economic, funding and technical aspects; 2) involve key local stakeholders by providing real-time communication and feedback through the use of technology, thus improving transparency, and vertical and horizontal communication; 3) provide citizens with the ability to contribute to the shaping of local policies for public urban spaces and their neighbourhoods or inner-city areas; 4) measure impact through SMART Key Performance Indicators by leveraging on existing frameworks and indicator databases pertaining to Smart Cities (i.e. UNECE-ITU SSSC), as well as projects (i.e. Horizon 2020 ESPRESSO project); and 5) speed up the implementation of innovative solutions in the local administrations, through the development of a smart urban solutions marketplace, a toolkit for organizational innovation in Local Government, and a compendium of best practices.

The main visible results of the CLEVER project are a joint report on the state of the art for smart cities in partner countries, a scan of potential partners for future cooperation in the field of integrated urban development (local self-government, research organizations, non-governmental sector) and optional sources of funding for the implementation of future projects in the field of the smart city, and an application submitted for the main project (iCLEVER). The CLEVER project aimed to support project partners in identifying new candidate stakeholders for implementing the main project through discussions with the local government, research, citizen initiatives and NGO representatives.

The project enabled partners to untangle some of the existing problems, potentials and dilemmas related to the concept of the smart city, including its applicability in different local contexts. The research methodology is predominantly based on a qualitative approach and includes:

- Desk-based analysis of supranational, EU and national policies in partner counties in order to portray externalities and influences in relation to the absorption potential of partner countries in the field of smart cities; analysis of urban governance levels and stakeholders (vertically) and across different local contexts (horizontally);
- SWOT analysis to assess the conditions and dilemmas in the field of integrated urban development for smart cities through technical, financial, governance, leadership, innovation and behavioural domains at the national (contextual) level; and
- Cross-checking findings through Discussion groups with partners from Romania, Croatia and Serbia during meetings in Baia Mare, Romania (21.01.2019; 29.07.2019) and Belgrade, Serbia (09.04.2019) (Figure 1).

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF SMART CITIES

Supranational level

The operationalisation of the smart city concept at the supranational level is carried out through a set of framework conditions, policies and regulations. A cross-cutting dimension of the supranational policies analysed in this paper is that of decentralisation and governance in the context of the smart city. These instruments of integrated planning serve to coordinate and integrate smart city stakeholders – cities, businesses, and research organisations. The supranational documents related to smart cities that were analysed are outlined in this section, in order to provide understanding about external stimuli in the field in the case of Serbia.

Following the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly in 2015, countries have struggled to find a way to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDGs) at the national level. Therein, the smart city concept is often seen as a linking normative dimension that embraces SDGs at the local level. Urban governance and regeneration in the



Figure 1: First row – Discussion group with partners in Baia Mare, Romania (January 2019);
 Second row – Discussion group with partners in Belgrade (April 2019)
 (Source: authors)

context of smart cities are directed towards implementing SDGs, and especially Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 8 and Goal 11. It should be noted that Goal 11 is directly related to the topic of urban governance for smart cities, and seeks to ensure: access to safe and affordable housing and transport; enhanced urbanization and the capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and governance; protected cultural and natural heritage; reduction in the adverse environmental impact of cities; the provision of universal access to safe, green and public spaces; and an increased number of settlements adopting and implementing integrated urban policies (Table 1).

The New Urban Agenda – Habitat III (2017) is another document which is relevant for Serbia in terms of support for adopting feasible and participatory urban policies at the national and sub-national level to enhance effective urban governance for smart and sustainable cities. The new UN Urban Agenda promotes capacity development as a

multifaceted approach that addresses the ability of multiple stakeholders and institutions at all levels of governance and combines the individual, societal and institutional capacity to formulate, implement, enhance, manage, monitor and evaluate public policies for sustainable urban development. National urban policies are considered the main pillars for developing governance structures, improving urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design, the local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation plans. Paragraph 15 of the New Urban Agenda determines that national governments play a leading role in the definition and implementation of policies and legislation in the field of sustainable urban development and emphasises the equally important contribution of subnational and local governments, as well as civil society and other relevant stakeholders, transparently and responsibly. By recognising the importance of the above-mentioned groups of stakeholders in managing the urban

Table 1. Comparative overview of priorities for well-governed cities in supranational policy frameworks (Source: authors' elaboration)

Policies / domains	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)	New Urban Agenda of the UN (2017)	Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development (2017)	OECD National Urban Policy Programme (2019)
Urban governance	- good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions (goal 11 and 17)	- ensure national, subnational and local institutional and regulatory frameworks adequately linked to transparent and accountable finance mechanisms (principle 86); - compliance to legal requirements through a strong, inclusive management framework that deals with land registration and governance	- enhance principles of governance by promoting integrated national policies for smart and sustainable cities with a focus on capacity building and institutional support to promote policy implementation (principle 4) - promoting dialogue between governments and local stakeholders; creating professional platforms for dissemination of results (principle 5)	- enhance knowledge creation, exchange and management on NUP at all levels of government, civil society, private sector and other relevant stakeholders (goal 1) - help increase the capacity of (human, financial and institutional) policy makers at national and subnational levels (goal 2)
Social development and participation	- well-being for all at all ages (goal 3) - inclusive and equitable quality education for all (goal 4) - information dissemination for integrated decision-making and participation (goal 16)	- enhance inclusive, implementable and participatory urban policies to mainstream sustainable urban and territorial development as a part of integrated development strategies and plans (principle 86)	- developing and implementing capacity-building programs for participatory, integrated, sustainable, resilient and affordable urban areas, while enabling the involvement of all relevant stakeholders (principle 2)	- provide direct country support for the preparation of national urban policy and participatory process to ensure the involvement of relevant ministries, subnational governments and civil society; monitor the progress and implementation of national urban strategies (goals 3 and 4)
Innovation and economic development	- inclusive and sustainable economic growth; productive and full employment (goal 1)	- sustainable management and use of land (principle 104)	- focusing on innovation, inclusiveness, improvement of youth perspectives, and job creation (principle 1); - circular economy for sustainable urban mobility solutions, enhanced green infrastructure and nature-based solutions (principle 3)	- provide a networking platform for all levels of government, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to enhance collaboration for economic development (goal 5)

challenges, this document states the need for a *smarter approach at the decisional level*.

The Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development (UNECE, 2017) addresses the challenges that settlements in the UNECE region face. This document emphasises the importance of a smart city approach in relation to education, training and employment in the face of contemporary challenges in urban development. Additionally, it provides a set of strategic goals for national, regional and local governments in the field of economic, social and environmental components of development, focusing on innovation, inclusiveness, the improvement of youth perspectives, job creation and capacity building through programmes for participatory, integrated, sustainable, resilient and affordable urban areas, while enabling the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. It recognises urban governance as an instrument for promoting integrated national policies for smart and sustainable cities, with a focus on capacity-building and institutional support to promote policy implementation. Finally, it outlines the need for regional cooperation and participation in the relevant global and regional processes to harmonize methodologies, definitions and approaches to data collection in the areas of housing, urban development and land management, promoting dialogue between governments and local stakeholders, and creating professional platforms for the dissemination of results (and processes).

The objectives of the OECD National Urban Policy Programme (joint initiative of UN-Habitat, OECD and Cities Alliance, 2019) in relation to smart city are: to increase the capacities (human, financial, and institutional) of policymakers at national and subnational levels to develop and implement urban policies, particularly in the form of national urban policy (NUP) by providing a platform for capacity-building activities; to enhance knowledge creation, exchange and management in NUP at all levels of government, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders; to provide direct country support for NUP preparation and participatory processes to ensure involvement of relevant ministries, subnational governments, and civil society; to monitor the progress of NUP in its role as a part of the monitoring process of the New Urban Agenda/SDGs, through a global review, as well as country-specific reviews on NUP; and, to provide a networking platform where all levels of government, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders can engage in the process of developing and implementing NUP.

EU level

In line with the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) of the UN and 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development of the UN, a policy framework for smart cities at the EU level was developed in the Urban Agenda of the EU/Pact of Amsterdam (2016). This document calls for a more effective integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies and legislation with a potential impact on urban areas, thus contributing to territorial cohesion and reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions. Priority themes and cross-cutting issues of the Urban Agenda of the EU related to

smart cities are outlined in the following principles:

- (12.1) Effective urban governance, including citizen participation and new models of governance;
- (12.2) Governance across administrative boundaries and inter-municipal cooperation: urban-rural, urban-urban and cross-border cooperation; link with territorial development and the Territorial Agenda 2020 (well-balanced territorial development);
- (12.3) Sound and strategic urban planning (link with regional planning, including “research and innovation smart specialisation strategies” (RIS3), and balanced territorial development), with a place-based and people-based approach;
- (12.4) Integrated and participatory approach; and
- (12.5) Innovative approaches, including Smart Cities.

National level

In line with international urban development guidelines, some activities were carried out to implement principles of urban governance for smart cities in Serbia. As a contribution to the New Urban Agenda, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, the national association of local authorities in Serbia, jointly developed the national report for the Habitat III conference in Kioto (2016). Some other national-level documents which enhance the governance component of the smart city are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. An overview of national policy documents in Serbia related to the field of smart cities
(Source: Strategija održivog urbanog razvoja Republike Srbije do 2030. godine (2018), Damjanović et al. (2017))

2008	National Sustainable Development Strategy
2010	Law on the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia Information Society Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2020 Strategy for Electronic Communications Development in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2010-2020
2011	Strategy and Policy for the Industrial Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2011-2020
2012	National Social Housing Strategy
2014	Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia
2015	Public Financial Management Reform Program 2016-2020 Strategy for Supporting the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness for the period 2015-2020 Strategy for e-Government of the Republic of Serbia by 2018
2016	Strategy for Development of IT Industries 2017-2020 Strategy on the Regulatory Reform and Strengthening of the public policy management system for the period 2016-2020 in the Republic of Serbia Strategy on Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia in the period 2016-2020
2017	Draft Strategy for Cultural Development in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2027
2018	National programme for adopting the acquis

From the previous section, it should be noted that SDGs (2015), New Urban Agenda (2017), the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development (2017) and the OECD National Urban Policy Programme (2019) strive to enhance the adoption of national urban policy as an instrument of integrated urban development that embraces the principles of governance for smart cities. Thus, this section devotes some more attention to the role of the (integrated) national urban policy which Serbia adopted in 2019³ – “Sustainable Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030” (hereafter SUDSRS). It is the first national urban policy which distinguishes urban governance as not only an instrument for integrated urban development, but as a strategic principle for policy implementation.

The main task of the Serbian national urban policy is to establish coordination over different sectors and define priorities by coordinating the needs and interests of different actors and enable the absorption of different funding options. The policy document was developed through a wide participatory approach as support to urban governance. Participatory events were organised throughout the policy drafting process, involving local planning experts, city government representatives, ministry representatives, university and research institutes and NGOs. Participants were engaged in discussions about the possibilities of integrating different aspects of development in coherent strategic goals and packages of measures. In addition, the policy formation process allowed the participants to identify *priority areas of intervention at the local level*, intended for integrated application of strategic goals and specific measures. These areas of intervention are a spatial dimension of the national policy, and aim to direct available EU funds towards the development priorities at the local level through bottom-up decision-making processes.

BUILDING ON THE CLEVER PROJECT EXPERIENCE

The previous sections provide an overview of the policy framework for the implementation of urban governance principles in the context of a smart city approach at different levels. This section presents some of the main findings in this field which were derived as a result of the CLEVER project through visible (tangible), but also less visible (intangible) results.

The participatory approach to the identification of the main problems and potentials of integrated urban development throughout the CLEVER project process enhanced understanding of context-specific dilemmas in the field of urban governance for smart cities. The partners from Baia Mare (Romania) described their city as one of the pioneers among the members of the Romanian Municipalities Association in developing and improving the Urban Network in Romania. The city administration has wide experience in preparing and managing over 20 projects under EU funding (ICT PSP, URBACT II, URBACT

III), and a portfolio of smart city projects. Smart city projects are in line with the city’s Integrated Development Strategy, and they are directed towards resolving environmental issues and societal challenges. Some of the main challenges of the city were recognised as: poor use of governance mechanisms by officials; a lack of collaboration between different planning departments; insufficient bottom-up engagement; and the lack of an integrated approach in urban development. The partners from Varaždin also spoke about their activities in the implementation of smart city projects. The main policy framework for units of local and regional government in Croatia in the field of smart cities was outlined for 2018-2019. A number of activities in line with this framework have been implemented via EU projects (INTERREG, URBACT III), including GRIC (City Complaints and Information Centre) as a citizen participation system, and GIS (Geographic Information System). Some of the main challenges in urban development were recognised as digital non-compliance of all local administration units with the needs of citizens, a low level of public participation in planning, low individual capacities, a lack of content and possibilities to engage young people in development activities. Finally, some contextual aspects of Serbia related to the urban governance of smart cities are outlined in Table 3.

The CLEVER project process allowed for the identification of priority areas of intervention in partner cities through horizontal, vertical and spatial integration of key measures and activities. The priority areas of intervention include public spaces in partner cities (Baia Mare, Romania; Varaždin, Croatia; and Smederevo, Serbia) that proactively, in a bottom-up fashion, seek both physical renewal and improvements in citizens’ quality of life. Throughout the project, partners identified available sources of funding for integrated activities within regeneration projects focused on public spaces in the partner cities. Additionally, the CLEVER project process enabled the development of trust between the main project partners and other sectors (public, commercial and NGO) to establish a governance system for more efficient identification and application for EU funds to support local innovative financial and methodological tools for urban regeneration.

Besides the opportunity to discuss and disseminate the above-mentioned findings with project partners and involved stakeholders, another significant visible result of the CLEVER project was the proposal submitted for the main project iCLEVER under the Interreg Danube Transnational Program call 2020, specific objective 4.1 *Improvement of institutional capacities to tackle societal problems*. The collaborative preparation of the main project iCLEVER allowed partners to mutually learn about the possibilities for implementing urban regeneration strategies for public spaces in partner cities through a transnational framework based on participation, governance, public-private partnerships, and urban development financing instruments. Thus, less visible, intangible results of the CLEVER project relate to capacities acquired for the urban governance of smart cities among the project partners. Another less visible result of the overall process is the strengthening of individual and institutional capacities of local authorities in the aforementioned partner cities through discussions in the formation of the main project.

³ The initiative for the elaboration of the national integrated urban policy was derived from the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Table 3. Governance practices for smart cities – contextual aspects of Serbia
(Source: authors' elaboration)

Governance	Societal and Innovation	Technical	Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted national integrated urban policy • Existence of local integrated urban development policies • Enhanced level of Serbia's representation in international programs and projects in the field of sustainable urban development • Incentives in practising public participation beyond minimal legal requirements • Dissemination of data on "good practice" introducing additional levels and methods of public involvement through different legal framework incentives • Poor institutional and individual capacities for implementation of urban governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich cultural heritage and cultural biodiversity, developed mechanism for protection of cultural goods, but also deterioration of some urban settlements • Inherited public services infrastructure facilities and limited experience in the implementation of social housing programs • Low level of citizen participation in the process of urban development • High poverty and social exclusion risk rate (around 41.3%), growing disparities in the quality of life among urban and rural areas • The ban on employment in the public sector means that no units can be formed to deal with the acquisition of new knowledge and competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant natural capital (ecosystems and resources) and ecosystem services for rural areas • Different levels of development of primary traffic infrastructure in central urban zones and new parts of urban settlements • Variety of urban settlement typologies • Number of objects which need urban regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High unemployment • Insufficient financial capacities for public services • Growing awareness of support to program/project-based budgeting and strategic planning at the national and local level • Lags in the transformation of financing tools for planning and development • Informal construction • Poor quality of housing stock • Lack of economic development policy, poor access to sources of financing, limited financial means • Undeveloped PPP models • Insufficient financing from national and European funds for inclusion and poverty reduction schemes/insufficient capacities (human/intellectual/institutional) to absorb the EU funds

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The role of urban governance in a smart city is to generate new forms of social collaboration through the use of information and communication technologies. In the face of change and the promotion of smart cities through EU Cohesion policy 2021-2027, urban governance mechanisms are mostly applied in practice as flexible systems to respond to new information, changes and new conditions by approaching the available funding mechanisms. Some aspects of urban governance have also been enhanced in Serbia through recent amendments to the legal planning framework. More extensive forms of participation and collaboration in planning have been introduced in Serbia since 2014 in the Planning and Construction Act, Planning System Act and the Local Self-Administration Act (Službeni glasnik RS, br. 72/2009, 81/2009 - ispr., 64/2010 - odluka US, 24/2011, 121/2012, 42/2013 - odluka US, 50/2013 - odluka US, 98/2013 - odluka US, 132/2014, 145/2014, 83/2018, 31/2019, 37/2019 - dr. zakon i 9/2020; Službeni glasnik RS, br. 30/2018; Službeni glasnik RS, br. 129/2007, 83/2014 - dr. zakon, 101/2016 - dr. zakon i 47/2018), while the term smart city has only recently been used in national policy papers (SIURDS 2030, Smart Specialization Strategy of RS – ongoing preparation). Still, the findings presented point out at a state-centred preference in governance practices. A pertinent critique of this approach relates to the implementation of a "citizen-centric manoeuvre", in which collaboration between different government departments spreads out to communities and other stakeholders, who then share responsibilities for the development processes, as well.

Taking into account the findings derived from the CLEVER project, which relate to the supranational, EU, national and local framework for governance in a smart city context, this paper offers the following recommendations for governance regimes in the local context of Serbia. There is a need for strengthening effective public services, partnerships and

dialogue, support to subsidiarity, and strengthening of the role of the local community. Harmonization and coordination in decision making and urban governance are needed, and can be achieved through the management of programs and projects on multiple levels, thus increasing the capacities of future project partners. In this sense, the CLEVER project can be seen as a contribution to enhancing governance capacities in the field of smart cities, which requires further development.

One of the benefits of urban governance is that it has the capacity for experimentation, innovation and learning. In the transitional planning context of Serbia, with the strong path-dependency of a dominantly top-down approach to decision-making, participatory governance processes may increase awareness among citizens and stakeholders of their right to be included in decision-making. Traditional methods of informing and consulting should be directed towards strengthening social responsibility and balancing public and private interests, where innovative practices should be specifically encouraged as a part of economic and cultural activity. In some cases, governance practices may also enhance the redistribution of top-down power structures, and enhance cooperation between actors around their common interests – local community actors, investment vehicles and organised civil society around the creation and implementation of jointly-defined priority projects. Within such a framework, processes can be carried out through informal networking, coalition building and mutual agreements, as instruments for setting collective rules.

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