

The Access Rights to Communication Resources in the Smart Local Service System: First Insights

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at highlighting the relevant role of Service Science perspective in place governance. The study conceptualizes a new form of territorial “governmentality” capable of managing the access to place communication resources and activating decision-making collaborative logics with stakeholders. The methodology envisages the integrating of Service Science Management and Engineering+Design and Viable Systems Approach. Smart local governance has to enable a broader access to place communication resources, regulating the access rights. “Open Governance” mechanisms and access to shared place communication resources facilitate the value co-creation process with stakeholders. The conceptual paper presents the typical limitations of the deductive approach. The paper argues that stakeholders play a proactive role in the creation, innovation and utilization of place-specific communication resources through high degree of interaction, availability and accessibility to a growing body of information. The paper offers new insights on local governance issue, emphasizing the role of the governance in ensuring stakeholders’ access to communication resources. Developing improved methods to facilitate effective value co-creation process is valuable for a participatory and interactive approach in place communication management.

Keywords: value co-creation, smart governance, access rights, Service Science Management and Engineering+Design (SSME+D), Viable Systems Approach (VSA), communication management.

INTRODUCTION

The territory is a system composed of a set of actors and resources, activities and relationships, driven by a smart governance system (Caroli, 2006). This paper aims at highlighting the relevant role of Service Science approach in the governance of territorial systems, conceptualizing a new form of local governance, capable of managing the access to place communication resources and activating decision-making collaborative logics with different stakeholder group. In fact, many value co-creation processes and interactions with stakeholders result from mechanisms for changing access rights to resources (Spohrer et al., 2008).

For this kind of analysis, it is necessary to reinterpret the managerial practices of local governance, referring to the new logic of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1982) that refers to the ability of policy makers to create the right

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conditions for the viability and survival of a territory, reconciling expectations of the different stakeholders involved directly and/or indirectly in territorial system.

The study intends to offer guidance to policy makers in order to improve place communication management and enhance the contribution of stakeholders in the creation and innovation of communication resources of place identity. A network of “beneficial relationships” with all stakeholders (Gummesson, 2008) is essential for the success of smart local governance (Valdani and Ancarani, 2000).

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. In the following section, the methodological approach (SSME+D and VSA) is briefly described. This helps us to identify specific elements that can be used to develop a conceptual background for participative decision making process for corporate communication in a smart local system, which is the objective of the study. We then present the proposed framework and, at the same time, some examples that strengthen the arguments made in support of the idea that stakeholders can play a proactive role in the creation, innovation and utilization of place-specific communication resources. “Open governance” mechanisms and appropriate configuration of access rights to shared place communication resources facilitate the value co-creation process with them.

METHODOLOGY

Service Science Management and Engineering+Design (SSME+D) and Viable Systems Approach (VSA)

The methodological framework of the paper integrates the principles of two fields of study: Viable Systems Approach (VSA) and Service Science Management and Engineering+Design (SSME+D). The key-concept of VSA that has contributed to the shift to a dynamic interpretation of the territory is that of “system” (Golinelli, 2000, 2011; Trunfio, 2008). According to this logic, the territory does not represent a mere settled space (*static view*), but it is the result of interactions between systems and resources for the common purpose of survival (*dynamic view*). A territory becomes a system when it is possible to recognize a government able to establish a subjective order in the local area, to share with stakeholder group (Piciocchi et al., 2009)

Within the VSA perspective, there are three fundamental systemic conditions that characterize the business, social and local organizations (Barile and Saviano, 2011): (a) *openness*, the ability to exchange resources with the other systems in a selective manner; (b) *contextualization*, the search for viability through interaction with certain privileged entities, such as supra-systems that influence organization’s survival, and (c) *dynamism*, the development of structure in accordance with emerging changes. The concept of *openness* is pivotal in territorial context: in open systems, there are exchanges of energy, matter, people and information with the external environment (Mele et al., 2010). Infact, Open system theory (OST) analyzes the relationships between the organizations and the environment in which they are involved, focusing on organizations’ ability to adapt to changes in environmental conditions (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

The SSME + D approach is determined for the qualification of Local Area in terms of Smart Local Service System. It combines different disciplinary perspectives to drive innovation, competitiveness and quality of life through the services (Spohrer, 2010). Contrary to the assumption in the in Goods Dominant Logic (GD logic) or in Service Dominant Logic (SD logic) (Vargo and Lush, 2004), which consider goods and services as two distinct and opposed entities, SSME + D views them as two sides of the same coin: while “goods” refer to the tangible aspects of territory (structural dimension), “services” refer to the intangible ones (systems dimension – processes, interactions, informative exchange, adaptability). Consequently, according to this new approach, the service is “the systemic configuration of goods”, the “product in action” (Golinelli et al., 2010), because it is derived from a process of sematization (sense-making) of the good, useful for creating the best conditions of consonance and resonance with the context.

The viable systems are designed as “systems of local services”, or dynamic configurations of resources (people, technology, organizations and shared information) which create and deliver value to all systems (IFM and IBM, 2008). In particular, the SSME + D considers the service as a result of the interaction between the provider (the territory) and the client (the stakeholder group): the main actors of a system of services. Both contribute to the co-creation of value of the services: the provider with his knowledge and expertise, the client with its resources.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Access and access rights

The concept of “access” is a topic studied in various disciplines of the social sciences (political science, linguistics, sociology, communication, economics, etc.). In linguistics, “access” is often related to “lexical access” that is viewed as “a contextually, restricted, not independent process” (Swinney,1979). In sociology, “access” means to make use of knowledge, relation information, culture, services. “Access” becomes a keyword in the new society of networks in which users are always connected and the need for access to information and knowledge is continuous and invades every moment of life. Rifkin (2001) defines the current historical period as “the age of access”: the new phase of capitalism characterized by the transition from an economy dominated by the market and the concepts of material good and properties, towards an economy dominated by established values such as culture, information and relation.

Intuitively, access rights deal with the social norms and legal regulations associated with resource access and usage. In political science, the object of access rights is the administrative document. Access to documents, governed by Regulation (EC) No. 1049/2001, is a crucial factor for the transparency in the European institutions politics. In order to facilitate access to data, the European Parliament has therefore established a special Electronic Registry that allows direct access to most of the European Parliament documents through a search form. Access right has been introduced for the first time in Italian legislation by law 1990, n. 241 and currently regulated in civic access context (D.lgs 33/2013). The holders of access rights are all stakeholders that have a direct, concrete and current interest, corresponding to a legal position and connected to the protected document in relation to which access is requested.

In Service Science, access rights are referred to different categories: properties (owned outright), contracts (leased rights), public uses (shared access), and personal relations (privileged access) (Spohrer et al., 2008). In particular, owned outright refers all the rights and responsibilities associated with property ownership (e.g., to buy something). Leased-contracted has as a result certain rights more restricted than ownership (e.g., to rent a hotel room or a car). Shared access deals with public use resources (e.g., public roads and much of the information on the world-wide-web). Privileged access refers to inalienable rights (e.g., personal history and private thoughts).

In local context the access rights, above all shared access, play a significant role. They refer to the access to resources of public institutions: services, information, language, processes, metrics, knowledge, skills, data, documents. This study intends to realize how to configure the access rights to manage communication resource of place identity in territorial systems.

Place communication resources

A service system entity, also in a territorial context, is a dynamic configuration of resources. The types of resources include people, technology, organizations and shared information. With respect to place communication resources, in line with some basic assumptions underpinning the Resource-based view, they can be categorised as being either place-specific or non-place-specific. In particular, place-specific communication resources express the specific capabilities, strengths, core values, and/or historical references of a specific territorial system. They are rooted in the concept of place identity. Place identity arises from territorial vocation (Siano, 2001) linked to key features (tangible and intangible) of the territory offer which is defined as the natural inclination of a place to fulfill the stakeholders' expectations through value creation.

Place identity consists of all forms of symbolic expression, behavioral and informational-communicational through which local system is related with stakeholders (Siano et al., 2008). Place identity, place image - the set of beliefs, ideas, information than stakeholder have about a place (Kotler et al., 1993) - and place personality - territorial vocation that results from natural, historical and cultural features of a territory - contribute to create place reputation. The reputation of a local area is one of the most important intangible resources to build, maintain or consolidate the consensus of various stakeholders (Fombrun and van Riel, 2004).

Place communication resources, referring to how the territory can be communicated, described, told (also through social media), are included in of structural equipment of place identity. They are durable resources with medium-long term implications, the typical ones are (Siano et al., 2013):

1) keywords and symbolic elements - such as common starting points, core theme, brand mantra, message style, slogan, place visual identity (place brand), jingle (Olins, 1989; van Riel, 1995; Melewar and Saunders, 1998; Keller, 1999; Cornelissen, 2008) - intended to enable the identification and recognition of a place and ensure consistency in the messages' content.

2) owned (place) media, such as online communication channels (place web sites, place blogs, social network pages, etc.) and offline (tv business, corporate magazine) personalized in the contents.

3) guideline, intended to guide the activities of corporate communication. They are:

- sets of rules or heuristics related to the management and expression of place brand (Balmer and Gray 2003);
- the value statements and ethics codes (Schwartz, 2001), intended to guide the behaviors of the members of the territory and communication initiatives;
- participatory mechanisms, such as, for example, establishing common process rules (Christensen et al., 2008) in order to reduce the rigidity of a vertical and hierarchical communication structure and enable organization members to listen continually to various stakeholder groups and create an interactive dialogue with them;
- styles of place storytelling (Lichrou et al., 2010) deriving from place stories.

Usually, the creation, the sharing, the innovation of place communication resources require different categories of access rights: owned outright and leased rights (e.g., brand copyright, licensing, contracts, etc.) and shared access. We maintain, instead, that a widely shared access to these place communication resources is useful to design new and improved value co-creation mechanisms. The renewal of resource set, in fact, it is considered crucial for system survival and for the creation and maintenance of local competitive advantage. Smart local governance has an pivotal role in ensuring stakeholders' access to communication resources.

SMART LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEM AND ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

In the "access era", the shift from ownership to access have determined profound changes in the way political institutions govern territorial system (Rifkin, 2001). Lately, access to government information, also in terms of communication resources, is receiving renewed emphasis. This emphasis reflects two trends: 1) a local government reinterpretation that stresses openness and transparency principles, and 2) increasing availability and continuing development of information technologies that allow institutions and individuals to find, share, combine and re-use government communicational contents (Dawes, 2010).

It needs a conceptual reinterpretation of the governance, conceived as an institution (structure) and practice (system), which requires the development of a new art of "governmentality" (Foucault, 1982; Rose, 1999; Dean, 2010) and describes a local area in terms of Smart Local Service System (SLSS). Smart Local Service System emerges from the integration of SSME + D and ASV: the territory is seen as a viable system (ASV) and in terms of a stable system of local service (SSME + D).

In this study, "governmentality" refers to the current structural change of governance based on the concepts of power and competence related to the configuration of a multilevel governance system: a new form of "governmentality" characterized by a reconfiguration of collaborative decision-making logic. A SLSS presents, structurally, a combination of resources (people, technology, organizations and specific communication resource for place identity), direct to reinforce co-creation of value. At systemic level, a SLSS consists of a network of cooperation and collaboration can strengthen competitiveness through the functions of a Smart Multilevel Governance (stakeholders) (see Figure 1). Thus, the territorial system has to reject the top-down approach, based on individual and despotic power and embrace the bottom-up logic of governance networks (Triantafillou, 2004; Trunfio, 2008; Piciocchi and Bassano, 2009, Piciocchi et al., 2012) built on a shared knowledge and trust relationship with all relevant territorial stakeholders.

Smart governance has to reconfigure access rights to communication resources, by mutually agreed to value propositions (Spohrer and Maglio, 2009). The rights of access (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) are affected by the degree of openness to external interaction decided by the local system governance (Saviano et al., 2010). The degree of openness depends on the relevance of the systems from which a territory receives inputs, and it is expression of

structural elasticity and systemic flexibility finalized to the adaptability with external contexts (Siano et al., 2009). Thanks to its openness degree, the smart governance is able to interact with local and non-local stakeholders for the search of sustainable competitive advantage.

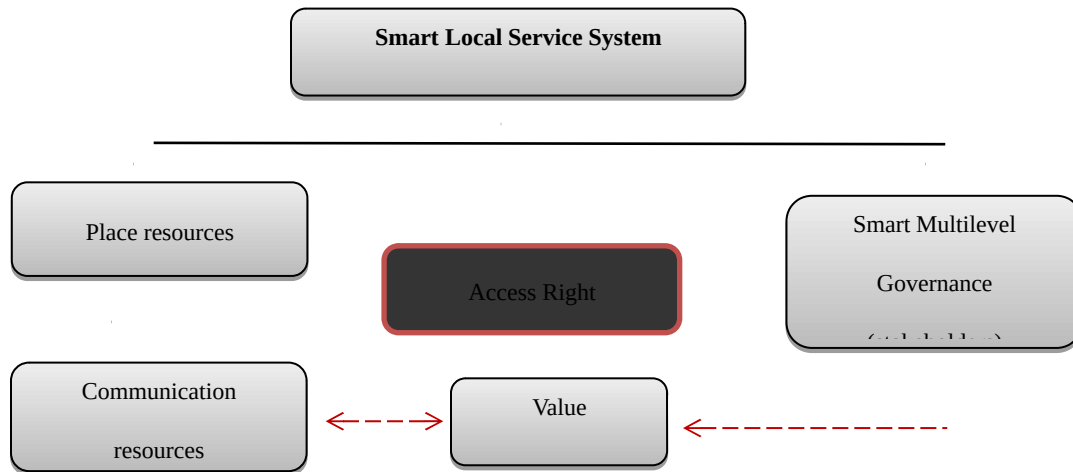


Figure 1. Smart Local Service System and access rights (Our elaboration)

Therefore, in order to enhance the contributions of territorial actor groups to place communication management, the smart local governance has to enable a broader access to place resource, above all place communication resources. “Open” government mechanisms and the access to shared place communication resources facilitate the value co-creation process with stakeholders. In service science, value co-creation interactions are mechanisms for changing access rights to resources referring to service system interactions and outcomes (Maglio et al., 2006), reinforcing the contributions of actor groups. In this perspective, it is important to reconfigure in territorial system the different role of stakeholder group of Smart Multilevel Governance in contributing to the creation or innovation of place communication resources.

CO-CREATION OF PLACE COMMUNICATION RESOURCES: SOME EXAMPLES

The access to resources means interaction, engagement, negotiation, giving the public the opportunity to take part in communication decision-making, creating contents with the local audience (Carpentier, 2011). More and more local resources offerings are designed to be accessed on the web. The participation of stakeholders on the online media is based on the principle of social empowerment (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008), defined as a process of sharing that tends to re-interpret the traditional processes of place communication. Empowerment is a process of territorial transformation and restructuring of the relationship between the territory and its actors to affect substantially on creation of place reputation.

Stakeholders play a proactive role in the creation, innovation and utilization of place-specific communication resources (Siano and Vollero, 2012; Siano et al, 2013), through high degree of interaction, availability and accessibility to a growing body of information. Stakeholders can provide important advice on keywords, slogans, jingles that identify a geographic area or share their experiences on a territory, from the perspective of place storytelling. Constant listening to the stakeholders offers interesting possibilities for enrichment and / or redefinition of the distinctive characteristics of a place, in term of keyword.

The case “Adopt a word” is an example of listening activities of stakeholders led by APT Emilia Romagna and addressed to improvement and enrichment of Wikipedia entries relating to the geography, history and culture of this Italian region. The initiative proposes to local stakeholders (citizens, tourists, etc..) to actively participate to the growth of the words of Wikipedia, through the insertion of text, images, links. The whole project takes place online

through the website of the initiative (www.adottaunaparola.it) and social channels of Emilia Romagna Tourism: Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

The ideas competition set up by the territorial entities to engage stakeholders in identifying the messages related to place identity are examples of how place communication can make use of the contribution of local stakeholders.

The Prague International Advertising Festival, for example, opened in April 2012 the contest “Slogan for Prague” to residents, visitors, communication professionals, etc. from different countries with the aim to identify a claim to be included next to city logo in every communication dedicated to tourism promotion. People of 21 different countries have responded to the initiative and most interesting contributions were evaluated by policy makers for future place communication campaigns.

Ideas, comments, suggestions and experiences of different stakeholders, thanks to the pervasiveness of social media, can be redesigned as new common process rules (CPR) (Christensen et al., 2008) in the field of communication management. In local areas, participatory mechanisms are necessary to help public institutions and stakeholders in the process of discovering new solutions that can affect the creation and utilization of place-specific resources. A sense-adapt-respond approach, together with co-creating processes (CPRs), supports the diffusion of communication capabilities that value two-way communication, dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders. These CPRs stimulate interactive relation, involvement and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, enabling territorial system to adapt to environmental changes. Use of specific media, also in online context, enables to implement these rules in a process of value co-creation.

An example of CPR is provided by the Municipality of Copenhagen that, with the “Licence to Critique”, aims to promote a culture of openness and self-reflective in which local stakeholders to feel free to express their thoughts on local government. With this slogan, the city explicitly invited its employees and citizens to reflect on the values of the organization, providing them with the “license to criticism”, which translates into the ability to offer ideas and suggestions for the improvement of territorial policies.

In line with Gummesson (2006), we commended a many-to-many approach, which extends the notion of value creation to include interactions among networks of providers and communities of users/customers. This ensures an appropriate recognition of the role of other entities and interested parties in value creation process in the smart local systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The idea that smart place governance should be open, accessible and transparent requires a reinterpretation of governance mechanisms in terms of Smart Local Service System. The paper offers new insights on local governance issue, emphasizing the role of the smart local governance in ensuring stakeholders’ access to communication resources. The openness of smart place governance is pivotal, in fact, to ensure the access to place-specific communication resource, in order to definite and reconfigure place identity, thanks to stakeholders’ contribution. The place communication decision of policy makers can be influenced by instances of different local stakeholders group which, facilitated the support of digital media, contribute to affect the choices on the elements of place communication (Chadwick, 2003; Siano et al., 2008). The management of planned place communication processes (and influence of those unplanned), is a crucial challenge for the success in global competition between territories.

The importance of the local smart governance rises on its capability to seize the opportunities of relational exchange and to support the collective balance and positive interactions with local actors. Developing improved methods to facilitate effective value co-creation process in a local area defines a participatory and interactive approach in the management of communication. The adoption of a collaborative approach with stakeholders responds to the environmental changes and the progressive empowerment of users/citizens.

The different joint access rights, the sharing of resources, and mediator role of governance facilitate the common living and acting (of policy maker and stakeholders) and enhance the efficiency of the territory (Carrubbo et al., 2012). A SLSS, driven by a multi-level governance, is able to ensure the achievement of a distinctive competitive advantage for the territory through the creation of a positive place reputation.

The conceptual paper presents the typical limitations of the deductive approach based on literature review. The paper could be considered a first step in a stream of research on different aspects of smart local governance which are yet unexplored. This may implies new practices and research challenges in this field of study. In this perspective,

it is important to reconfigure in territorial system the different role of stakeholder group of Smart Multilevel Governance in contributing to the creation or innovation of place communication resources.

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