

Chapter 7

Open and Big Data as a Resource to the Development of Social Innovation Initiatives and Smart Territories

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ABSTRACT

The chapter aims to reflect on how social innovation and entrepreneurship (SIE) initiatives can mobilize the existing knowledge of open data on the territory in order to generate more knowledge and support the decision-making process. It therefore wants to answer the questions: How do the available data help the decision-making process of SIE initiatives? Can access to data and its analysis contribute to the resolution of social problems in a faster and more sustainable way? In order to support the answer to the previous questions, the database of the IES-SBS network (a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower social entrepreneurs) and interviews conducted with key informants were analyzed. It is concluded that access to data needs to be converted into a logical framework of information, but when this happens data/information can help the decision-making processes of SEI initiatives. This way the solution of social problems will be more quick, sustainable, and smart.

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INTRODUCTION

The amount of online transactions and interactions provide huge amounts of existing data. It is currently discussed how these data can be used, for what purpose, how to store it, how to cross it with other data. In the end, it is discussed how the gains in access to this amount of available data can be extracted and what to exclude from this treatment (Berrone, Ricart, & Carrasco, 2016; Sadiqa & Indulska, 2017).

Currently, the use of available data (Open Data) has been a concern in Portugal because it may help the territory management by local authorities. This concern is very much related to the development of Smart Cities. The Lisbon City Hall is an example of this. In 2016 the municipality launched the Smart Open Lisbon, which, in the logic of the public sector transparency and organizational cooperation, made citizen interaction data available to public entities.

The term Smart City (Hollands, 2008) brings the citizens to the center of the discussion, considering that they are for whom the improvement of services, spaces and tools is done. The chapter will use the broader concept of Smart Territories, since not only urban (but also rural) places, with a greater relevance in Portugal, or even other spaces within them, such as companies, schools, associations, communities, etc. So what is at stake here is all the data produced by online interactions, be it between people, between people and machines and between machines.

The access to this amount of data should be perceived as an added value, above all, because it will allow the decision-making process of the territorial development more effective and efficient, with results also more efficient and positive.

A preponderant role at this stage is the one of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SIE). The aim of SIE initiatives is to solve social problems, contribute to a sustainable territory and to improve the quality of life of citizens. The ultimate goal is that the SIE initiative can come to an end, because that means the social or environmental problem that motivated it has ended as well.

The creation of smart territories is promoted through the initiatives with a specific social mission, in an innovative and alternative way to the existing solutions, sustainable and with impact. Access to the territorial data will allow the decision-making process of those SIE initiatives in a more informed way, so that their action in the territory will produce results that meet the effective needs of citizens and the territory.

The general objectives of the chapter are:

- Contribute to the understanding of the importance of Big Data in the context of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship;

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