

# Chapter 10

## Governance, Livability, and Sustainability in Smart, Learning, and Future Cities: Enriching Urban Life and the Ambient

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the research literature for urban governance, livability, and sustainability in smart cities and regions. Issues, controversies, and problems emerging from the literature review are highlighted in formulation of a conceptual framework for enriching urban life and the ambient in smart cities aided by urban governance, livability, and sustainability. Using an exploratory case study approach combined with an explanatory correlational design, variables pertaining to the exploration are identified, such as housing affordability and useful community functions and purposes, and the nature of their relationship is assessed. Through the lens of urban governance, livability, and sustainability, potentials for enriching urban life and the ambient are explored in smart cities, attentive to health and well-being and quality of life, while informing directions for future research and practice such as human flourishing.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Timmer and Seymoar (2005) refer to the “achieving and sustaining” of a livable city as “a living dynamic experiment” where livability both in cities and on the planet more generally is described as “a central challenge.” Batty (2018) describes a “great transition from a world with few cities to a world of all cities” and yet, what if the earth is unable to sustain such a scenario as “a world of all cities”? It is worth noting that during the global COVID-19 Pandemic, reports (Thomson Reuters, 2022) indicate that an “urban exodus” is occurring for example, from larger Canadian cities such as Montreal and Toronto to smaller cities and communities. Also of note perhaps is the theme of the 2014 Annual Challenges of Government Conference (CGC, 2014) which was “flourishing cities” where, after four days of “thought-

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provoking discussions” involving many people around the world, Dean Ngairé Woods noted that “four factors emerged as essential for building and developing cities that ‘flourish’: people, sustainable planning, investment, and good governance.” This chapter is significant in that it undertakes an exploration of governance, livability, and sustainability in relation to urban life and the ambient in smart cities giving rise to the motivation of this work as described in the objectives that follow.

**Objectives:** The main objectives of this chapter are to: a) enrich the notion of urban life and the ambient in the context of smart cities in relation to governance, livability, and sustainability; b) develop a conceptual framework for enriching urban life and the ambient in smart cities aided by governance, livability, and sustainability; and c) explore the relationship between variables in smart cities such as *livability* and *housing affordability* as factors relevant to human flourishing that may provide insight into navigating the way forward in smart environments. These objectives give rise to the main research question under exploration in this chapter – *How do governance, livability, and sustainability contribute to the enriching of urban life and the ambient in smart, learning, and future cities?*

## 2. BACKGROUND

Joss (2018) seeks to “reinvigorate the place of the public in the future city” arguing “for strengthening institutional frameworks” while “advancing a more active role for citizens to become involved in actualizing and scrutinizing future cities” where the complexity and challenge of public governance is said to involve “institutional arrangements, conceptual discourses, and on-the-ground practices.” From an urban sustainability and planning perspective, Garau and Pavan (2018) develop an index “to evaluate a city’s level of smart urban quality” where urban quality of life is said to refer to “all factors that, either directly or indirectly, affect citizens’ quality of life” contributing to a smart sustainable city. Higgs et al. (2019) advance a livability index that takes health and well-being into consideration and the need for integrated urban governance across sectors to inform urban planning policies. According to Abrahams (Voices, 2020), “how well local government can navigate” the “contestations, demands, and expectations” is key for “realizing [a] sustainable future for urban dwellers” identifying “material outcomes” as important, such that, “it is the material impact on urban dwellers that ultimately evaluates how well we have governed.”

### 2.1 Definitions

Definitions from the research and practice literature are provided for key terms used in this chapter.

- **Governance (urban):** Abrahams (Voice, 2020) states that “urban governance is about the management of both urban demands *and* expectations all while self-managing a local bureaucratic infrastructure that is at the mercy of political tides and under constant scrutiny by the Treasury.”
- **Livability:** Higgs et al. (2019) cite the work of Lowe et al. (2015) in providing a definition of livability as “safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, and environmentally sustainable” communities that have “affordable and diverse housing linked by convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to employment, education, public open space, local shops, health and community services, and leisure and cultural opportunities.”

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