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La Smart City à Bruxelles : Quand « intelligence » rime avec vidéosurveillance

De Brusselse Smart City: videobewaking als middel om een stad “slim” te maken

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Introduction

In 2014, the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) embraced the concept of Smart City, which has become an inescapable subject of urban political discourse. While there is no unanimously agreed definition of the concept¹ [Cavada *et al.*, 2014; Albino *et al.*, 2015], the Centre d'informatique pour la Région bruxelloise (CIRB) – the public interest organisation in charge of IT and the Smart City in BCR – believes that “the smart city can be defined by six keywords”: collaborate, save, innovate, integrate, participate and simplify. The first keyword implies that “in the Smart City, administrations work in a decompartmentalised manner. They exchange data and share projects to make services more efficient and user-oriented, while creating economies of scale.”² Thus, decompartmentalising public action by promoting the implementation of cross-cutting policies through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is theoretically one of the primary objectives of the Smart City. However, it has to be said

that in practice, policies aimed at making Brussels a Smart City remain essentially limited to the competences of a single organisation, namely the CIRB.

First, this article traces³ the process of agenda setting⁴ which led to the adoption of the imprecise concept of Smart City by BCR. Next, it questions the public policy choices aimed at making Brussels a Smart City. It attempts to understand why a cross-cutting policy in the area of mobility – a sector which is normally a priority for this type of project – has not emerged in the framework of the Brussels Smart City, while a security policy has gained a foothold as its main focus. The centralisation of regional video surveillance is the only policy of the Brussels Smart City project which has managed to overcome regional institutional compartmentalisation. This article therefore demonstrates how the regional political and institutional organisation in Brussels influences public policy choices. Finally, the conclusion summarises the main arguments of this work.

1. The Smart City à *la Bruxelloise*: a brief chronology of a project designed by and for the CIRB

On 7 May 2014, with a view to the next legislative term, the CIRB published a white paper questioning the reasons for the absence of Brussels in the rankings of international Smart Cities, even though some regional policies were already “in keeping with the criteria of a Smart City”. Two explanations were put forward: the fact that the “Region [did] not [yet] have a smart strategy as such” and that it “[did] not target this niche with its international communication.”⁵ The problem was therefore both communicational – in a context of global competition between cities – and related to a lack of vision concerning the use of ICT in its policies. To make up for this absence, the CIRB set four objectives for itself: to make Brussels a connected, sustainable, open and secure region.

The newly formed regional government for the 2014-2019 legislature announced its intention to make Brussels a Smart City: a digital capital. To this end, it wished to set up a platform to promote partnerships between different stakeholders and to ask the CIRB for “a common coordinated strategy for the integration of new technologies in all areas of community life.”⁶

With government support, the CIRB project was able to begin. It then launched a series of events, generally open to the public, concerning different aspects of the Smart City⁷. To contribute to the regional strategy, Smart City Breakfasts – bringing together politics, administration and the private sector – were co-organised with Agoria, the federation of technology firms⁸. A Smart City Manager was also hired. Her mission is to advise the government and to be the “regional contact point for all concrete projects”.⁹

At the end of 2015, the CIRB published a booklet¹⁰ listing the four priorities of the project: mutualising video protection (terms constantly used by the CIRB instead of the terms “centralise” and “video surveillance”, which have a more negative connotation), improving the connection speed of schools and integrating administrative services and the regional data centre. In January 2017, the government approved a Smart City vision note asking members of the executive to collaborate on the project and the CIRB to set up a Smart City Office. It also announced that the three regional digital plans, namely the Smart City strategy, the NextTech Plan 2017-2020 and the Regional Innovation Plan,

were henceforth united under the label digital.brussels and that “the Smart City [would be] the backbone of the new Brussels digital strategy.”¹¹

In March 2018, a consortium won the CIRB tender of a value of € 500 000¹² over a period of three years, to form a Smart City Office in charge of overseeing regional initiatives¹³. In April 2019, the Council of Ministers validated the CIRB's Smart City vision note which attempted to define a common policy, whose “primary aim [would] also [be] to use the available resources in the most efficient way possible by promoting collaboration and synergies between the various Brussels administrations.”¹⁴ On 16 June 2019, in its new white paper published for the next legislature, the CIRB's 2014-2019 assessment of the Smart City was positive, having achieved most of its objectives¹⁵.

Figure 1. Chronology: the Brussels Region Smart City project

In order to make BCR a Smart City, the CIRB wanted to improve the connection speed for schools and IRISnet customers (the company resulting from its public-private partnership with Orange), extend free Wi-Fi to certain metro stations and municipal libraries, develop administrative dematerialisation platforms, make use of open data, launch new applications, organise events linked to mobile technologies and centralise video surveillance. In order to measure the project deployment on an annual basis, seven indicators – each linked to one or more of the above policies – were put in place (Table 1).

As the policies of the project fell almost exclusively within the remit of the CIRB, it associated them more or less logically with the initial objectives. For example, its administrative IT platforms were linked to the objective of sustainability; they were expected to reduce paper waste and the number of kilometres driven by the administrations¹⁶. Some of the numerical targets proposed, such as regional Wi-Fi, were relatively low (and were thus quickly achieved and exceeded) and even surprising: the

indicator measuring the CIRB's contribution "to the mobile revolution" accounted for new mobile applications, updates to existing ones and the organisation of events in the same way, despite the fact that these elements, which were different in nature, did not require the same resources.

Table 1. Objectives, indicators and public policies of the Brussels Smart City (table based on the annual evolution of CIRB indicators)

4 objectives	7 indicators	Status of indicators (%)						Public policies, objectives and deadlines
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
1) Connectivity	Broadband connection	14	49	63	75	85	94	Connect all 388 primary schools with broadband (16 to 30 Mbps) by 2018
		60	65	124	152	308	340	Connect 140 out of 165 secondary schools and 425 out of 850 IRISnet clients to ultra broadband (30Mbps+) by 2018
	Free regional wifi	41	44	72	88	-	96	Extend wifi to 8 metro stations and one library per municipality by 2019
2) Sustainability	Paperless administration	45	57	72	83	93	99	Save 20,6 million sheets of paper per year in government offices thanks to IT platforms by 2018
	Save on government motorised travel	50	63	88	116	123	264	Save 105 000 km of government motorized travel per year thanks to IT platforms by 2018
3) Openness	Open Data	50	63	88	116	123	264	Have 8 organisations releasing data under open licences by 2018 (3 in 2013)
								Exceed 12 000 downloads of UrbIS cartography (open licence) by 2018 (7 600 in 2013)
	Mobile apps and initiatives	17	33	33	42	67	100	Launch 18 applications/new versions/initiatives (events, conferences, workshops) by 2018 (2 in 2013)

4) Security	Mutualisation of video surveillance	0	0	10	54	58	65	Integrate 2865 cameras into a shared regional platform with data storage in the regional data centre
								Number of authorities/organisations using these shared services (no clear target given)

While the Smart City evokes images of futuristic technology – used by the CIRB in its communications (see Figure 2) – it must be noted that the project's policies are not particularly innovative. Indeed, when the white paper was published in 2014, most of them had already been implemented, without being qualified as “smart”. Only three policies were still in their infancy: those aimed at connecting primary schools to broadband and secondary schools to ultra broadband, as well as the policy aimed at centralising regional video surveillance. However, all three already had the support of the authorities. A consensual technical solution existed for the first two and had already begun to be implemented for IRISnet customers, yet the recently adopted video surveillance solution was an unprecedented policy for BCR.

Figure 2. Etterbeek station in 2040. Example of technologically futuristic illustrations used by the CIRB to promote the Brussels Smart City, without any obvious link with the policies implemented

Source: CIRB, 2015c. Envie d'imaginer le Bruxelles numérique de demain?. In: event.smartcity.brussels [online]. 2015. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: <https://event.smartcity.brussels/event2016/?page=home>

2. Operationalisation of the concept by BCR: why the Brussels Smart City is at a standstill in terms of mobility, while the centralisation of regional video surveillance has become its main project

2.1 Smart City and mobility: a caricature of institutional compartmentalisation in Brussels

For several years, BCR has had to deal with a major congestion problem¹⁷. Mobility is one of the priorities of any Smart City project; the European initiative aimed at stimulating the development and use of smart urban technologies even considers it to be the first priority of this type of project¹⁸. However, a cross-cutting policy involving the main administrations in the sector has not emerged within the framework of the Brussels Smart City, despite the will initially expressed by the CIRB and the government¹⁹. So why does the Brussels Smart City not make mobility one of its priorities? The answer to this question is multidimensional.

Firstly, as explained above, the Brussels Smart City is above all a project designed by and for the CIRB, under whose impetus the Region has adopted this imprecise concept. In its white paper published in 2014, the CIRB called on the mobility sector to collaborate in the Smart City project, yet it remained an empty proposal. The main administrations in the sector, Bruxelles Mobilité and STIB, were surprised that they were not contacted by the CIRB before the publication. This call for collaboration therefore rang hollow and, according to some of the people interviewed, it was more of a communications exercise than a true proposal. An even more crucial factor is that others questioned the very relevance of a potential collaboration with the CIRB, not hesitating to be ironic about the fact that the latter had a smaller IT department than STIB, thus making its expertise and infrastructure superfluous. In other words, the mobility sector was not seeking a collaboration with the CIRB, which the latter acknowledged. Nevertheless, it was impossible for the CIRB to envisage the implementation of a Smart City in Brussels without talking about intelligent mobility.²⁰

Secondly, under the 2014-2019 legislature (during which the stakeholder interviews were conducted), the political context was not favourable to potential collaboration in the area of mobility, in the framework of the Brussels Smart City project. During this legislature, the political supervision of the CIRB was exercised by the Flemish Christian democrat (CD&V) secretary of state Bianca Debaets. She therefore had to convince her colleagues in the government to carry out cross-cutting projects under the Smart City label. However, this supervision was relatively weak from a political perspective, for at least three reasons. Firstly, it was Bianca Debaets' first time in the executive branch, making her an inexperienced secretary of state. Secondly, her party – which had been in constant decline since 1999 – was the smallest electoral force in the coalition. Thirdly, the distribution of ministerial portfolios only granted her relatively limited competences, delegated in particular by the Flemish socialist minister for mobility and public works, Pascal Smet [Tassin and Colleyn, 2014]. He delegated “IT and digital transition” to her, which placed the CIRB under her political supervision.²¹

Knowing that the chances of success of a mobility project pushed by her own administration would be nil, the secretary of state did not attempt to propose a

collaboration to the minister responsible for the sector, who had not delegated any competence in the field of mobility to her. However, such a project should have been budgeted within Pascal Smet's ministry in particular. According to some, the less than cordial relations between these two members of the government – both Dutch-speaking and therefore in direct competition for re-election – did not help matters.

Thirdly, and more generally, mobility is usually a contentious issue for Brussels parties, including those in the usual left-centre-right governing coalitions. As a result, opportunities for interministerial collaboration in this area are relatively limited. The work by Dandoy and Piet [2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d] on the programmatic priorities of parties for the 2014 elections shows that all six government parties in the 2014-2019 legislature made mobility a priority in their programmes. When we look at the content of these programmes, we see that all of the parties shared the same observation, namely that the Region was too congested, but that, faced with this complex and multifactorial problem, each party came up with its own solutions, with an eye to the elections. Thus, there were more and more proposals which were often contradictory. Only the proposal to invest more in public transport was agreed upon – which was the main proposal of the government agreement – provided that the size of the investments and their origin were not mentioned. In other words, mobility is a positional sector which is an area of competition for Brussels parties and even governmental parties, thus limiting the realisation of cross-cutting policies; even more so when the ministers concerned are in direct electoral competition, as was the case in the 2014-2019 legislature.

The fourth and final element to be taken into account is the institutional complexity inherent in the mobility sector in Brussels. In BCR, there are already some 30 stakeholders²² responsible for mobility – not all under the same ministry – which makes governance of the sector more complex. Projects involving different administrations have already failed²³. Consequently, this institutional fragmentation is often pointed out by those who consider it responsible for at least part of the problems faced by the sector. This was particularly true for the minister for mobility, who did not want the competences in this area (especially his own) to be reduced further. For this reason, he had no interest in letting the CIRB and its political supervision interfere in the sector²⁴.

In conclusion, a cross-cutting mobility policy was not put in place to make Brussels a Smart City because the mobility sector did not need the CIRB; mobility is a divisive sector for the parties in the left-centre-right coalitions which usually govern; this sector is already fragmented at institutional level; and finally, because under the 2014-2019 legislature the CIRB's political supervision was relatively weak. The implementation of IT platforms to reduce the number of motorised trips by administrations therefore became the only mobility-related policy of the project. Moreover, during the 2014-2019 legislature, independently of the Smart City project, various Brussels administrations attempted to set up a common regional mobility management platform (Brussels Smart Mobility), in order to improve data sharing in this area. But this cross-cutting collaboration was soon limited as well, as the Brussels executive refused to recognise this new form of organisation [Bocquet 2020: 96].

2.2. Smart City and the centralisation of regional video surveillance: a security policy as the main project to make Brussels a Smart City

Since the adoption of the Smart City concept by the Brussels Region, just one cross-cutting policy – involving different administrations and ministries – has been developed to make Brussels a Smart City. This policy involves the centralisation of regional video surveillance, and was adopted by the authorities at the end of the 2009-2014 legislature. This security policy has rapidly become the main focus of the Brussels Smart City.

In Brussels, in addition to the police, many state institutions have video surveillance cameras in public places²⁵. In 2016, there were 8 000 cameras in BCR, and the trend is rising²⁶, both in quantitative terms (STIB alone plans to use 15 000 devices by 2025²⁷) and qualitative terms (image quality, device mobility, analytical software, facial recognition, etc.²⁸). For a long time, this institutional spread was a coordination problem for the police. A police area was not able access real-time images from another area or public institution. In order to obtain them, it had to go through a complex procedure, whose speed and efficiency depended on the goodwill, size and technical means of the institution which had the images.

Figure 3. Surveillance cameras in the municipalities and police areas in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2015

Source: De Keersmaecker and Debailleul, 2016

Table 2. Number of cameras per police area

Police Area	Polbru	Mont-gomery	North	South	Marlow	West	Total BCR
2006	19	4	21	50	6	92	192
2015	347	48	129	80	41	151	796
Scheduled	352	65	165	138	43	221	984

Source: De Keersmaecker & Debailleul, 2016²⁹

Following the fatal attack on a STIB supervisor in April 2012 and the strike which followed in protest against the security measures in place, the federal government promised public transport unions to make their real-time footage available to the police in order to improve the safety of staff and passengers³⁰. Although the tragedy took place outside the bus in question, STIB then implemented video surveillance in all of its vehicles; additional devices were also installed in and around its stations [Matgen, 2014]. In order to enable image sharing, the “Cameras” law was amended in August 2012³¹, henceforth requiring public transport companies to share their images with federal and local police in real time and free of charge. However, a royal decree specifying the details of this sharing still needed to be adopted. Despite a *favourable* security context (attacks), it never saw the light of day, thus blocking the federal project for several years. Financial problems (transport companies did not want to bear the cost), political problems (renewal of the executive) and technical problems (lack of a national solution) were cited³².

In Brussels, the CIRB capitalised on this deadlock – which had opened a window of opportunity³³ – to propose a solution for BCR. At the end of 2012, it presented a proposal to the Brussels executive to study the regional situation regarding video surveillance. The executive agreed due to the parliamentary interventions it received for this technology and its considerations on the creation of a crisis centre with real-time regional images³⁴. The CIRB conducted its field study between April and December 2013³⁵. The government then asked for proposals. Four scenarios were developed, each with a technical proposal, a budget and an operational impact; the executive sent a summary of the proposals to the institutions concerned, without providing any financial information³⁶. In March 2014, the executive adopted the project, opting for the scenario which, in its view, offered the best compromise between the centralisation of images and the partial autonomy of the stakeholders³⁷.

The CIRB then had to acquire video management software (VMS, allowing them to manage the infrastructure and process images in real time), develop a centralised platform and store everything in two data centres providing a thirty-day storage capacity (maximum legal duration) for all regional images. The data would be stored simultaneously between the two sites in order to ensure their safekeeping. The sites would be linked by dark fibre – guaranteeing a very high speed – and connected to the central police station in each police area via two conventional fibre optic cables, each taking a different route. The regional VMS would then retrieve the images directly from the source before transferring them to the stakeholders according to their rights. Only STIB – the largest regional camera owner – had a special arrangement to keep its

system and transfer its images via a unidirectional gateway, as it had already begun a process to renew its devices and VMS as part of its automated metro project³⁸. From then on, any investment within the framework of the centralisation of regional video surveillance would be financed up to 20 % by the CIRB³⁹.

Figure 4. Chronology: the centralisation of regional video surveillance

How can we explain the adoption of the security policy aimed at centralising regional video surveillance when, like mobility, it was originally a competence shared by several institutions (many institutions have video surveillance systems in BCR)? The answer to this question is multidimensional.

Firstly, when the CIRB proposed to centralise regional video surveillance, most of the institutions involved in the project were in favour. Due to the coordination problem mentioned above, the six Brussels police areas had been asking for a solution for a long time, which would allow them to access and store images from other institutions⁴⁰. The areas which had already invested in an internal centralisation solution were opposed to the regional project only because they did not agree with the technical solution adopted and not because they did not wish to obtain images from other institutions. They were therefore opposed to the external control of their systems, the non-participation of the CIRB in the investments already made, the fact that the images would first have to go through the regional VMS before being made available to them and, for some, the obligation to give up their VMS in favour of the regional VMS (while STIB could keep its own). On the other hand, the areas with the most outdated equipment and/or without an internal image centralisation solution were the most supportive of the solution adopted. Public transport companies were also in favour of the project; it finally allowed them to transfer their images to the police (in accordance with the amendment to the “Cameras” law of August 2012), without having to bear the

cost. Finally, Bruxelles Mobilité, which had many cameras in BCR, also supported the project, hoping to be able to access images from other institutions in future⁴¹.

Secondly, the CIRB project easily obtained the support of the Brussels authorities at the end of the 2009-2014 legislature because the political context was favourable, for at least two reasons. On the one hand, under that legislature, the political supervision of the CIRB was not exercised by a secretary of state, but rather by a more experienced minister who was also from the CD&V party (third legislature in the executive). Brigitte Grouwels held a number of coveted ministerial portfolios, which implied other power relationships within the executive. On the other hand, the CIRB had anticipated the sixth state reform which had just granted new competences to the Regions, notably in the area of prevention and security⁴². The socialist minister-president Rudi Vervoort brought the CIRB project to the executive, wishing to take advantage of the new competences to set up a regional crisis centre under his authority. The centralisation of regional video surveillance was thus another step towards the realisation of the minister-president's project⁴³.

Thirdly, unlike mobility, security is usually a consensual issue for Brussels parties, including those in the usual left-centre-right governing coalitions. Dandoy and Piet's [2014e; 2014f] work on the 2009 elections shows that all six government parties in the 2009-2014 legislature – under which the centralisation of regional video surveillance was adopted – made security a secondary priority. If we look at the content of their programmes⁴⁴, we see that the Brussels parties shared a similar vision of the objectives of this sector and the measures to be taken. This was then confirmed by the 2009-2014 majority agreement, which only sanctioned consensual security measures for the government parties. Therefore, in Brussels, security did not constitute a positional sector in which there is true competition among the parties, thus facilitating the implementation of cross-cutting policies such as the centralisation of regional video surveillance.

Moreover, beyond the support for the project, how can we explain that once adopted at the end of the 2009-2014 legislature, the centralisation of regional video surveillance soon became the main project aimed at making Brussels a Smart City?

Following the May 2014 elections, the political supervision of the CIRB was exercised by a new secretary of state from the same party as her predecessor, thus facilitating the continuity of this policy⁴⁵. The new Brussels government – led by the same minister-president – then announced that it would “pursue the implementation of a video protection platform⁴⁶”. As the security issue had received increased attention since the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels on the eve of the elections, the project to centralise regional video surveillance allowed the new Brussels executive to act immediately in terms of security. Let us also note that the March 2016 attacks in Brussels, and the controversy surrounding the hunt for the “man in the hat”, contributed to giving a great boost to the CIRB project, to the point that from then on, according to some, one would simply need “to utter the word 'cameras' to receive a check from the government⁴⁷”. Following the attacks, the two-year budget for the centralisation of regional video surveillance was spent in a single year⁴⁸.

The centralisation of regional video surveillance was rapidly becoming the main focus of the Brussels Smart City, not only due to the favourable political context following the various attacks, but also due to at least four other reasons. Firstly, it was the only policy in the Smart City project which had not yet been implemented when the white

paper was published in 2014 and, more importantly, it was the only one with a completely new technical solution at BCR level. Secondly, it was undoubtedly the project's most ambitious policy in terms of infrastructure – from an organisational as well as a financial perspective – and by far; this is why its implementation was also the slowest to start and why it is still the least advanced policy of the project.

Thirdly, it was above all the only cross-cutting policy of the Smart City project. The centralisation of regional video surveillance was the only policy for which the CIRB succeeded in overcoming regional institutional compartmentalisation as well as the disagreements – notably partisan – within the coalition. Its interministerial nature and the fact that it involved different administrations which did not all share the same political supervision made it a special policy.

Fourthly, it was also the only Brussels Smart City policy which could be used as a framework for other regional projects. It was in its wake that Bruxelles Prévention & Sécurité was set up in 2015, an organisation under the authority of the minister-president which would allow a “centralised and cross-cutting administrative management of security”⁴⁹, in particular through the use of the CIRB's centralised video surveillance platform. The latter was also the spearhead of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) implemented in 2018. While the 191 ANPR cameras (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) installed to restrict access of the most polluting vehicles to the regional territory – and to fine their owners if necessary – were integrated into the CIRB platform to be at the disposal of the police (speed checks, vehicle searches, etc.)⁵⁰, those installed within the framework of the police ANPR project were also integrated to be used for the LEZ⁵¹. This example shows the many different uses which can be made of video surveillance devices installed in public places, at a time when the CIRB platform is already using analytical software and, in certain cases, facial recognition, thus taking advantage of the legal uncertainty surrounding this practice⁵².

3. Discussion: the political and institutional organisation of Brussels as the main limitation to the implementation of cross-cutting public policies

Studies on rational choice theories with respect to government coalitions have already shown that the political context of Belgium is one in which decision-makers give more priority to preserving their mandate (office seeking) than to public policy objectives in line with their ideology (policy pursuit) [Franklin, Mackie, 1983; Budge, Laver, 1986: 502]. This is also true in BCR, where the regional political and institutional organisation encourages decision-makers to give priority to their own interests in a vote-catching logic, rather than to the implementation of cross-cutting policies (even if they are in line with their ideology) between ministries and/or administrations which are not under the same political supervision. In other words, the tendency of the Brussels institutions to work in silos originates at the heart of the regional political and institutional organisation. The results of this research highlight three main characteristics of the Brussels political and institutional organisation. This list is, of course, not exhaustive.

The first particularity of the Brussels political and institutional organisation is its *partitocratic* nature. In Brussels, and more generally in Belgium, political parties have

an extremely high level of power by international standards [De Winter, 1996; Deschouwer, 2009]. They therefore have a considerable influence on the political agenda, even more so when they are members of the coalition. Consequently, certain sectors of public policy are more divisive than others for the government parties (due in particular to electoral issues), which directly influences the possibilities of collaboration between ministries and/or administrations which are not under the same political supervision. In the Brussels Smart City project, there is no cross-cutting policy on mobility, even though it is a highly divisive sector for the parties in the usual left-centre-right coalitions. In contrast, the only cross-cutting policy in the project – which the Brussels government actually manages to agree on – is a security policy, which is a consensual sector for the parties in the government majority.

The second particularity of the Brussels political and institutional organisation lies in the composition of the executive. The latter always consists of a minister-president, four ministers – two French-speaking and two Dutch-speaking – and three secretaries of state, at least one of whom must be Dutch-speaking⁵³. There is no formal rule on gender representation, but since July 2004, the successive governments have all included at least three women. Consequently, the Brussels executive is the result of subtle balances between political parties, linguistic communities and female and male personalities who must initially form a majority, reach a government agreement, and divide up the ministerial portfolios among themselves [Dumont and De Winter, 1999: 14-18]. These rules of composition thus lead to the formation of governments whose political spectrum is relatively broad, with sometimes minimal affinities between ministers, thus limiting the possibilities of collaboration. This is further reinforced by the fact that there is no interministerial delegation within the Brussels political institutions. In the context of the Brussels Smart City project, this is one of the elements which explains why no common mobility policy was developed between the sector's administrations and the CIRB during the 2014-2019 legislature; their respective political supervision – although both Flemish – was relatively distant from an ideological standpoint.

Finally, the third particularity is the distribution of ministerial portfolios at the beginning of the legislature, which allocates the political supervision exercised by the executive over the administration and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of public policies. This distribution is always the subject of intense negotiations between parties, each of which wants to obtain as many portfolios as possible, especially the most visible and those which are most important to its electorate [Dumont and De Winter, 1999: 19]. In BCR, competences are also distributed in packages to prevent one linguistic community from pocketing all of the most coveted portfolios. This division of competences is a key mechanism for understanding the public policy choices of a coalition government [Laver and Shepsle, 1994: 229]. The best way to predict the decisions of a coalition government would be to study the position of the party holding the portfolio in question, especially in a partitocratic system such as BCR [Laver and Shepsle, 1996: 42]. The allocation of ministerial portfolios – and the delegation of certain competences to secretaries of state – is thus an excellent indicator of the power relations inherent in the executive.

The fact that no cross-cutting policy was implemented in the framework of the Brussels Smart City project during the 2014-2019 legislature is partly due to the relatively weak political supervision of the CIRB. Conversely, when the only cross-cutting policy of the Brussels Smart City – namely the centralisation of regional video surveillance – was

adopted at the end of the previous legislature (2009-2014), the political supervision of the CIRB carried more weight within the executive. However, it is important to remember that the adoption of this security policy is also due to the decisive support of the minister-president, although the project did not originate in an administration under his supervision. Therefore, the head of the Brussels government can play a key role in the adoption of cross-cutting policies within the executive. Nevertheless, in Brussels, the minister-president has his own ministerial portfolios in addition to his role of coordinating government policy, which is not the case for the Belgian prime minister. As a result, he is more caught up in the political game of putting his own interests first, to the detriment of potential interministerial policies [Bocquet 2020: 104-105]⁵⁴.

Conclusion

In Brussels, the adoption of the imprecise concept of Smart City took place in 2014, at the initiative of the regional technical body, the CIRB. The latter then seized the opportunity to bring together several of its policies – most of which had already been implemented – under this new label. While one of the theoretical objectives of the Smart City is to decompartmentalise public action by promoting the implementation of cross-cutting policies through the use of technology, it is clear that the policies of Brussels in this area remain essentially limited to the competences of the CIRB. This is mainly due to the political and institutional organisation of the Region, which is a real obstacle to the implementation of cross-cutting policies between ministries and/or administrations which are not under the same political supervision. The case of mobility, which is usually associated with the development of a smart city, illustrates this deadlock effect.

However, the centralisation of regional video surveillance demonstrates that despite this political and institutional organisation, certain cross-cutting policies can still be implemented, even when it involves a competence shared between several institutions. Due to the fact that security is a consensual sector for the parties of the usual left-centre-right coalition, that many administrations supported the implementation of a solution to the problem of image sharing⁵⁵, that the political supervision of the CIRB was exercised by an experienced minister and, finally – even more decisive – that the socialist minister-president himself brought the project to the executive⁵⁶, the centralisation of regional video surveillance was adopted by the Brussels authorities at the end of the 2009-2014 legislature.

As a result of the unprecedented solution which it introduced at BCR level, the infrastructure and the technical and financial means which it would require, the time needed for its implementation and the fact that it was the only policy which would subsequently serve as a framework for other regional projects, the centralisation of regional video surveillance is on an altogether different scale from the other policies of the Brussels Smart City. Most importantly, it was the only policy in the project for which the CIRB succeeded in overcoming regional institutional compartmentalisation; its implementation depended on different ministries and administrations.

Thus, in Brussels, the Smart City reflects the regional political and institutional organisation; a complex partitocratic system which encourages decision-makers to give priority to their own interests and “private ground” in a vote-catching logic, at the

expense of public policy objectives in line with their ideology and/or the implementation of cross-cutting policies. This positioning logic often leads ministries, as well as administrations which are not under the same political supervision, to work in silos, as in the case of the Brussels Smart City policies, almost all of which fell within the exclusive remit of the CIRB.

Therefore, in this compartmentalised context in which ministers had little or no willingness to collaborate, the only cross-cutting policies which managed to reach the government agenda were those which were agreed upon by the coalition parties, which benefited from the widespread support of the administrations and/or which were supported by the minister-president himself – when his interests tallied with the adoption of a solution – such as the centralisation of regional video surveillance.

In July 2019, the newly formed government, still led by the same socialist minister-president, published its 2019-2024 majority agreement. The centralisation of regional video surveillance – which the executive also wishes to extend to private institutions such as shopping centres – was presented as an ideal response to the fragmentation of competences. The authorities presented their “Smart City ambition” in two pages and announced that they wished “to have a cross-cutting digital policy, transcending the limits of competences”. Mobility was mentioned again in connection with artificial intelligence and open data, as well as a whole series of issues related to digital technology. Nevertheless, the economic aspect of the Smart City was highlighted above all; a sign that, after the use of ICT for security purposes, investment in these tools in order to stimulate economic growth probably represents another common ground for the Brussels political authorities.⁵⁷

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APPENDIXES

Table 3. List of semi-structured interviews conducted with Brussels institutions

		Person interviewed and position	Date of interview
INSTITUTIONS	Brussels government	Didier Gosuin (DéFI) , minister for the economy, employment, training, health, the budget and the civil service	06/11/2017
		Dimitri Strobbe , Mobility and Public Works Attaché in the cabinet of the minister for mobility and public works, Pascal Smet (sp.a)	06/11/2017
		Tanguy De Lestré , IT, digital transition and Smart City advisor in the cabinet of secretary of state Bianca Debaets (CD&V)	31/08/2017
	CIRB	Céline Vanderborght , Smart City Manager	01/08/2017
		François Lambert , editor of the 2014-2019 white paper "smartcity.brussels"	04/08/2017
		Christian Banken , security policy coordinator	03/11/2017 + email exchange in April 2019
	STIB	Eric Auquière , expert in charge of innovation and data management at the head office	30/08/2017
	Bruxelles Mobilité	Jean-Paul Gailly , managing director	27/10/2017
		Karl Determe , engineer in the strategy directorate	05/09/2017
	Agoria	Ingrid Reynaert , manager in charge of the Smart City	29.08.2017
	Police areas	Koenraad De Brandt , police commissioner for the Brussels-North area	31/10/2017
		Christian Pauwels , police commissioner for the Brussels-North area	31/10/2017

NOTES

1. For the many definitions of this concept, see Caragliu *et al.*, 2011; Deakin and Al Waer, 2011; Nam and Pardo, 2011; Kominos, 2013. Some believe that this concept even has a normative – even ideological – dimension, representing a judgement about what an urban space should be and offer its inhabitants and visitors [Hollands, 2008: 304].
2. CIRB, 2020a. Définition. Qu'est-ce qu'une smart city?. In: smartcity.brussels [online]. 2020. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: <https://smartcity.brussels/a-propos>
3. Methodologically, this research is based on process tracing and source triangulation, resulting in a dozen interviews with stakeholders [Beach and Pedersen, 2019].
4. The notion of agenda is defined as "the series of issues which are subject to processing, in whatever form, by the public authorities and which are therefore likely to be the subject of one or more decisions" [Garraud, 1990: 27], whereas agenda setting refers to the underlying selection process [Hassenteufel, 2010: 50].
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15. CIRB, 2019b. Livre blanc 2019-2024. Les enjeux de la transition numérique au service des citoyens. In: cirb.brussels [online]. 2019. p. 47. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: <https://cirb.brussels/fr/quoi-de-neuf/publications/livres-blancs/livre-blanc-2019-2024-les-enjeux-de-la-transformation-numerique-au-service-des-citoyens>
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20. Interviews with Eric Auquier (STIB), 2017; Karl Determe (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017; Jean-Paul Gailly (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017; François Lambert (CIRB), 2017; Dimitri Strobbe (cabinet of the minister for mobility Pascal Smet), 2017; Céline Vanderborght (CIRB), 2017.
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- MONITEUR BELGE, 2014. Ministerial decree establishing the competences of the secretary of state deputy to the minister of the government of the Brussels-Capital Region in charge of finance, the budget, external relations and development cooperation. 20/07/2014.

22. The regional government, mainly the minister for mobility and public works, as well as the minister-president, who also gives his opinion, the public transport operators, led by the Société des transports intercommunaux de Bruxelles (STIB) with the Flemish transport company (De Lijn), the Walloon regional transport company (TEC) and the Belgian national railway company (SNCB), Bruxelles Mobilité, the administration in charge of equipment, infrastructure and transport, the nineteen municipalities of the Region and the six police areas, to name only the most important stakeholders.

23. See for example Brandeleer and Ermans, 2016 regarding the remote control system for traffic lights.

24. Interview with Dimitri Strobbe (cabinet of the minister for mobility Pascal Smet), 2017.

25. These include STIB, SNCB, Bruxelles Mobilité, the Port of Brussels, the fire brigade and emergency medical service (SIAMU), De Lijn and TEC.

26. GOVERNMENT OF BRUSSELS, 2016. La plateforme bruxelloise de vidéosurveillance opérationnelle de façon accélérée (press release). In: cirb.brussels [online]. 28/04/2016. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: <https://cirb.brussels/fr/quoi-de-neuf/publications/communiqués-de-presse/2016/28-04-2016-la-plateforme-bruxelloise-de-vidéosurveillance-operationnelle-de-façon-accelérée>

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29. No precise count of the number of cameras belonging to each police area has been conducted since that study, which provided information on the number of devices planned by each area and the different time frames. Nevertheless, the association Technopolice.be, which aims to map social control devices in Brussels, provides a map which is updated regularly and indicates the location of public and private cameras in the Brussels public space [Technopolice.be, 2021].

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31. MONITEUR BELGE, 2012. Act to amend the Act of 21 March 2007 regulating the installation and use of surveillance cameras to enhance security in public transport and at nuclear sites. 3/08/2012.

32. Interview with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017.

33. The concept of window of opportunity refers to the brief critical moments when advocates of a solution can attempt to bring together three independent streams which set the agenda (that of issues, that of public policy and that of politics) in order to get their solution adopted [Kingdon, 1995: 165]. A window may open as a result of a change in the issues stream or the politics stream [Ibid.: 174]. In this case, it was the death of a STIB supervisor (issues stream), coupled with the lack of a solution in the public policy stream at federal level, which opened a regional window of opportunity for the CIRB.
34. Interview with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017.
35. BELGA, 2013. Bruxelles sous (video)surveillance. In: La Libre [online]. 19/04/2013. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: <https://www.lalibre.be/regions/bruxelles/bruxelles-sous-videosurveillance-51b8fbdfe4b0de6db9ca4eb0>
36. Interviews with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017; Koenraad De Brandt & Christian Pauwels (Brussels North Police Area), 2017.
37. BELGA, 2014. Bruxelles: gestion centralisée des 3000 caméras de surveillance. In: RTBF [online]. 28/03/2014. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: https://www.rtb.be/info/regions/detail_bxl-une-plate-forme-pour-gerer-les-images-des-3000-cameras-de-surveillance?id=8233734
38. Interviews with Eric Auquièrre (STIB), 2017; Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017.
39. Interview with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017.
40. Interviews with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017; Koenraad De Brandt & Christian Pauwels (Brussels North Police Area), 2017; Céline Vanderborght (CIRB), 2017.
41. Interview with Karl Determe (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017.
42. BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION, 2020. Bruxelles Prévention & Sécurité (BPS). In: be.brussels [online]. 2020. [Accessed 2/06/2020]. Available at: https://be.brussels/a-propos-de-la-region/les-organismes-regionaux/bruxelles-prevention-et-securite?set_language=fr
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43. Interviews with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017; Jean-Paul Gailly (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017; Didier Gosuin (minister for the economy, employment, training, health, the budget and the civil service), 2017; Ingrid Reynaert (Agoria), 2017.
44. Some of the political programmes for the May 2009 elections are no longer available. We have therefore chosen to analyse the content of the programmes elaborated by the government parties in the 2009-2014 legislature for the regional elections of May 2014. Although the majority of these parties showed slightly more interest in the security issue in 2014 than in 2009, it was nevertheless a secondary theme for them under these two legislations [author's analyses; Dandoy, Piet, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d]. This slight increase in interest in the security issue between 2009 and 2014 can be explained in particular by the growing fear that the jihadists who had left to fight in Syria would return.
45. Interviews with Christian Banken (CIRB), 2017; Tanguy De Lestré (cabinet of the secretary of state Bianca Debaets), 2017.
46. *Draft majority agreement 2014-2019*, 2014: 62.
47. Anonymised excerpt from an interview, 2017.
48. Interviews with Koenraad De Brandt & Christian Pauwels (Brussels North Police Area), 2017; Tanguy De Lestré (cabinet of the secretary of state Bianca Debaets), 2017; Karl Determe (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017; Jean-Paul Gailly (Bruxelles Mobilité), 2017; Didier Gosuin (minister for the economy, employment, training, health, the budget and the civil service), 2017; François Lambert (CIRB), 2017; Ingrid Reynaert (Agoria), 2017; Dimitri Strobbe (cabinet of the minister for mobility Pascal Smet), 2017; Céline Vanderborght (CIRB), 2017.
49. MONITEUR BELGE, 2015. Order establishing a public interest body centralising the management of the prevention and security policy in the Brussels-Capital Region. 28/05/2015.

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ABSTRACTS

This article reviews the agenda-setting process which led to the approval of the Smart City concept by the Brussels Region in 2014 and questions the public policy choices aimed at making Brussels a “Smart City”. While one of the theoretical objectives of the Smart City is to decompartmentalise public action by promoting the implementation of cross-cutting policies through the use of technology, it is clear that the policies of Brussels in this area remain essentially limited to the competences of the regional technical body. This article attempts to understand why a cross-cutting policy in the area of mobility – a sector which is normally a priority for this type of project – has not emerged in the framework of the Brussels Smart City, while a security policy has gained a foothold as its main focus. The centralisation of regional video surveillance is the only policy of the Brussels Smart City project which has managed to overcome regional institutional compartmentalisation. This article therefore demonstrates how the regional political and institutional organisation in Brussels influences public policy choices.

En retraçant le processus de mise à l’agenda ayant conduit à l’appropriation du concept de Smart City par la Région bruxelloise en 2014, cet article interroge les choix de politiques publiques visant à faire de Bruxelles une « ville intelligente ». Tandis qu’un des objectifs théoriques de la

Smart City consiste à vouloir décroïsonner l'action publique en favorisant la réalisation de politiques transversales par le recours aux technologies, force est de constater que les politiques bruxelloises en la matière restent essentiellement cantonnées aux compétences de l'organisme technique régional. Cet article tente ainsi de comprendre pourquoi aucune politique transversale en matière de mobilité – secteur habituellement prioritaire pour ce type de projets – n'émerge dans le cadre de la Smart City bruxelloise, tandis qu'une politique sécuritaire s'impose comme son principal chantier. La centralisation de la vidéosurveillance régionale constitue l'unique politique du projet Smart City bruxellois parvenue à dépasser le cloisonnement institutionnel régional. Cet article démontre par conséquent comment, à Bruxelles, l'organisation politico-institutionnelle régionale influence les choix de politiques publiques.

Door het proces van agendasetting dat leidde tot de toe-eigening van het concept Smart City door het Brussels Gewest in 2014 te traceren, onderzoekt dit artikel de beleidskeuzes om van Brussel een “slimme stad” te maken. Een van de theoretische doelstellingen van de Smart City bestaat erin om het overheidsoptreden te ontzuilen door met behulp van technologieën de uitvoering van een transversaal beleid te bevorderen. Toch moeten we vaststellen dat de Brusselse beleidsmaatregelen op dit vlak hoofdzakelijk beperkt blijven tot de bevoegdheden van de gewestelijke technische instelling. Dit artikel tracht te begrijpen waarom er geen transversaal beleid inzake mobiliteit – een sector die gewoonlijk prioritair is bij dergelijke projecten – wordt gevoerd in het kader van de Brusselse Smart City, maar een veiligheidsbeleid het voornaamste werkterrein blijkt te zijn. De centralisering van de gewestelijke videobewaking is de enige beleidslijn van het Brusselse Smart City-project, waarbij men erin slaagt om de gewestelijke institutionele verzuiling te doorbreken. Dit artikel toont dan ook aan hoe de gewestelijke politiek-institutionele organisatie de beleidskeuzes beïnvloedt in Brussel.

INDEX

Keywords: public action, public space, innovation, institutions, mobility, security

Trefwoorden overheidsoptreden, openbare ruimte, innovatie, instellingen, mobiliteit, veiligheid

Mots-clés: action publique, espace public, innovation, institutions, mobilité, sécurité

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