When innovation meets institutions: the challenges of crowd-based innovations for governance

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Tensions and impacts around crowd-based innovations
Crowd-based innovation (CBI) engages a large number of individuals to supply goods and services (e.g., sharing and gig economy), provide information (crowdsourcing), provide funds (crowdfunding) or produce goods (makespaces). CBI could contribute to more inclusive, responsive and legitimate systems producing particular services or products. At the same time, it may also be at odds with current rules and regulations, which is problematic as such rules are intended to avoid negative impacts. The issue here is that institutions reflect certain public values, such as legitimacy around labour contracts, safety in consumer protection laws, and quality in sector regulations. But CBI blurs boundaries, for example between consumers and companies and between employer and employees. These boundaries are precisely what has been defined over time by institutions to safeguard relevant public values. In this line, this research aims at exploring the tensions created by the misalignment between CBI and existing institutions, and their impacts for public governance.

Crowd-logistics: blurring employer-employee boundaries
Crowds as a solution to provide logistics services fast and cost-efficiently, particularly for last-mile deliveries, shipping of goods and storage provision.
Crowd-logistics encourage passengers to use their spare carrying capacity on cars, bikes, buses and planes to carry parcels for other people (Buldeo Rai et al., 2017, p. 2).
Crowd-logistics is usually associated with access to cheaper, less-regulated labour, which provides enough flexibility to respond to variable demand.

Conceptual model guiding research

Research question
How does the emergence of CBIs impact public values and what kind of governance arrangements can safeguard public values in CBIs?

1. Reconstructing the interaction between CBI and institutions
2. Assessing impacts of these dynamics on public values
3. Exploring alternatives for public governance

Cases

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Sharing platforms</th>
<th>Light Electric Freight Vehicles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential for conflict</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimensions of institutional fields with conflict potential</td>
<td>• Labour regulations • Emissions management • Redistribution of rights and responsibilities.</td>
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Reference


About the project
This PhD research is part of the NWO-NIVI project: “Crowd-based innovation: Governing transition of responsibilities” (2017-2021).
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