**Responding future public crisis: the joint and variegated sense-making for implementing local climate mitigation projects**

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Organisational sense-making, namely ‘the social process by which meaning is produced (Phillips et al. 2004, 641)’, consists the detection and interpretation of an emerging organisational change that cannot be understood by existing cognitive system. It tends to act as an important trigger of institutional reform. The study of sense-making in public administration has remained a hot topic. Comparing with early research which mainly focused on the application of sense-making strategies by bureaucratic entrepreneurs (Baez and Abolafia 2002), recent research started to explore the role of sense-making mechanism in terms of managing public crisis and facilitating social collaboration (Lu and Xue 2016; Thomson and Perry 2006; Zhang et al. 2018).

The accurate sense-making is expected to clarify the ambiguity of public issue, reducing the uncertainty of public service and reconcile the values conflicts. However, there is still a lack of understanding about how it is functioning in practice. By conducting a multi-case study, this paper attempts to answer the following question: How does sense-making enact in addressing future public crisis across the governance network to facilitate collection action? We particular define here a type of ‘future public crises’, such as climate change, which has not fully broken out but seriously threaten the survival of human society in the future and require the collective prevention from now on. Comparing with the conventional public crisis, it is featured by bigger ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability, and can be effectively coped with only if multiple social and public actors collaborate.

This article starts with a literature review, by which constructing a theoretical framework about the conventional social constructivism viewpoint of joint sense-making. We then successively present four greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction related public projects at the city of Edinburgh, following an introduction of the research background and methodology. The pattern of sense-making of different actors, the convergence of shared sense-making, and the link between sense-making and collective action are highlighted in each case. In the last section, we conclude research findings and offer a set of propositions for further study. It is believed that conventional social constructivism viewpoint largely failed to explain the dynamic and multi-layered sense-making progress in the public collaborative network. Individualised actors have diversified sense-making approaches, which could produce differentiated motivations and lead to a common collective action. The joint and variegated sense-making landscape aggravates the volatility of today’s polycentric governance network, which proposed new challenges for public managers.

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