

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INCLUSION IN OPEN STRATEGY-MAKING

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LITERATURE

- **Open strategy** (Whittington et al., 2011)
 - 2 dimensions: inclusion and transparency
 - Different modes of openness (Hautz et al., 2017)
 - Origins in 'Open Innovation' → 'Open Organizing' (Splitter et al., 2023)
 - Result from organizational, societal, cultural, and technological forces
- Ideas of openness have long been embedded in **public** management (Hansen et al., 2022)



GAP

GAP: research focusing on **inclusion** in open strategy

- Different **modes** of inclusion (internal vs. external) (Dobusch et al., 2019)
- Important because who is included impacts outcomes (Mack & Szulanski, 2017)

RQ: Why do organizations select different modes of inclusion in open strategy-making?

- Seidl & Werle, 2018: Depends on the strategic issue (**content**)
→ yes, but not only...



METHOD



Comparative case study

- 3 local governments developing a strategy for the Circular Economy

Research setting

- Local government of 3 Belgian municipalities
- Selected by regional government to be guided by external consultant to develop strategy
- Inclusion of actors selected by local government
- 3 sessions: exploring > generating > selection
- Participatory approach

METHOD



Data gathering

1. 35 hours non-participant **observations** → field notes
2. 26 semi-structured **interviews** with participants (after sessions)
3. Supplementary material (final report, emails, website, policy plans)

Data analysis

1. Deductive coding in Nvivo
2. Vertical analysis → narrative
3. Horizontal analysis (narrative, outcomes)

METHOD

Coding → Based on 2 frameworks

- Activity-based theoretical framework (Hansen et al., 2022)
- Strategic Planning theoretical framework (Vandersmissen & George, 2023)

	Dimensions	Analysis
1)	Antecedents (organizational, environmental)	Differs for all 3
2)	Purpose (Why is strategy developed?)	Differs for all 3
3)	Subject (Who drives opening the strategy?)	Same for all 3
4)	Community (Opened to whom?, practitioners)	Differs for all 3
5)	Object (What part of strategy is opened?)	Same for all 3
6)	Practices (How is strategy opened?)	Same for all 3
7)	Praxis (location, tools)	Same for all 3
8)	Proximate outcomes	Same for all 3
9)	Distal outcomes	<i>Unknown</i>

CASE X

Organizational antecedents

- Circular Economy only marginally mentioned in policy plans
- Limited internal knowledge of the topic

[Circular Economy] “is out of our comfort zone” (Interviewee #4)

- No initiatives

“Circularity is one of those things we are not really considering” (Interviewee #1)

Purpose

- Identify the role of the local government in this transition

“[...] , but how do you actually translate that [Circular Economy] to the local practice of city X? That was the exercise that was open to us, I think.” (Interviewee #1)

Mode of Inclusion

- Only opened to internal departments considered relevant

“We made the choice not to do so [include external actors], [...] because now we have a kind of vision [...], but back then we did not have that and that makes it of course difficult if you want to sit together with a partner but you do not really know what we want [...].” (Interviewee #1)

CASE Y

Organizational antecedents

- Formally committed to implement the Circular Economy since several years
- Only one circular initiative implemented
- Still had to develop a plan for further implementation

“But when it comes to that larger framework around circularity, that certainly wasn’t there yet.” (Interviewee #5)

Purpose

- Identify priorities to start implementation together with local stakeholders (SR)
- Develop holistic strategy for implementation (LT)

Mode of inclusion

- Opened to internal departments considered relevant
- Limited opened to external stakeholders in region already working on the Circular Economy

“Then we said, yes, we know that you guys are working [on circularity], we do not know each other yet [...]. So, we were like, let’s collaborate [...], let us actually give it a bit of a kick-off with the trajectory.” (Interviewee #5)

CASE Z

Organizational antecedents

- Formally committed to implement the Circular Economy since several years
- Implemented in internal functions
- Several large projects on the Circular Economy with stakeholders

Purpose

- Connecting existing projects and actors in shared ambition

“[...] there is so much going on, but it is so disconnected [...]. How can we take a more overarching approach to that or can we really create a vision around that to be able to better support the people that are already working on it and to make it more visible.” (Interviewee #17)

- Develop a strategy for clear communication and to provide support

Mode of inclusion

- Opened to internal departments considered relevant + politician
- Opened to external partners from ongoing projects (half of the group)

CASE X, Y, & Z

Proximate outcomes

- Similar strategy content

“There are certainly local emphases in there, but actually, based on the sessions we have done now, we can kind of, yes, develop a tool that you can, yes, cut and paste and tailor the circular action plan for a local government.” (Interviewee #25 (consultant))

- Increased knowledge, awareness, and commitment

[The sessions were useful for] “getting more support [...], to excite people. Also just the awareness broader than just circular economy.” (Interviewee #3)

- Expanded network for collaborations
- Small initiatives launched

OVERVIEW RESULTS

	Case X	Case Y	Case Z
Antecedents (experience)	Low	Medium	High
Purpose	Explore	Develop	Connect
Internal inclusion	Open	Open	Open
External inclusion	Closed	Limited	Open

CONCLUSION

- Support claim that strategic issue determines inclusion (Seidl & Werle, 2018)
- But also depends on purpose of strategy-making
 - Which depends on organizational antecedents (experience with strategic issue)
- Strategy-making can be done for different purposes

Limitations & future research

- Does not show what mode is most appropriate
 - Does not show that openness increases over time
- Need for longitudinal studies on strategy implementation and distal outcomes



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