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THE USE OF THE VITÓRIA ONLINE APPLICATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN INSTRUMENT THAT FACILITATES OR GENERATES FRUSTRATION WITH CITIZENS?

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ABSTRACT

This article, through a qualitative research with semi-structured interviews with residents of the city of Vitória who use public health services and the mobile phone application "Vitória Online", discusses the impressions of citizens about the app's functionalities and the quality of the public service provided during the period of social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The application is an integral tool of the smart city project implemented in the municipality of Vitória, capital of Espírito Santo. In this work, we intend to understand how users of the Vitória Online application who use municipal health services have perceived the role of this tool during the Covid-19 pandemic period. This approach helps us to understand if the services provided by public management are being able to meet the needs and desires of the population of the municipality, as well as to indicate possibilities of paths for the implementation of public policies that are also capable of inserting the citizen during the stage of elaboration of the initiatives.

Keywords: Online Victory. COVID-19. Public Management. Satisfaction of the Citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

UN reports point out that the world's urban population has grown rapidly since 1950: currently, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas and the expectation is that, by 2050, this proportion will reach 70% (UN, 2018). Life in contemporary urban centers combines two elements capable of changing the relationships between individuals and organizations, as well as between civil society and governments: urban concentration is accompanied by the increased presence of technology in the daily lives of city dwellers, whether through the use of *smartphones*, or even through public and private services that are increasingly provided *online*.

This incorporation of technology into urban practices can change not only some social habits, but also the forms and possibilities of service delivery by public management. It is in this context of increasing incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into municipal routines that the debate on smart cities takes place. Academic interest in the subject has grown in recent years and this is reflected in the increase in the number of publications that address the subject in journals with a high impact factor (i.f.), as well as in thematic special issues in journals such as "*Social Science Computer Review*" (i.f. 3.253), "*Cities*" (i.f. 3.853) and "*Organization Studies*" (i.f. 3.107): All these periodicals set out to shed light on the subject.

Some authors discuss the use of ICT and highlight that these resources facilitate the lives of citizens and the management of the city in areas such as health, education or even innovation (Nam & Pardo, 2011), others debate decision-making based on *big data* (Kitchin, 2015), or the promotion of entrepreneurship (Kraus et al., 2015). Gil-Garcia et al. (2015) point out that many studies on the subject of "*smart cities"* emphasize physical infrastructure and network infrastructure, defining smart cities as providing their residents with technology-based solutions.

Hollands (2008), on the other hand, states that many administrations seek to associate themselves with the label of smart city in order to promote their own work. Due to this almost "publicity" aspect involved in some of these actions, the author highlights that deeper issues are left aside, such as the low involvement of the population in the debate on what a smart city is and the low (or absence of) investment in civic education to involve them in the political debate on the direction of the urban environment in which they are located.

Capdevila and Zarlenga (2015) state that intelligent management should not only be based on top-down resolutions, in which managers implement public policies without consulting and understanding the real needs of citizens. The authors argue that public

participation in the process is also necessary for a city to be truly smart, then associating a *top-down* stage with a *bottom-up one*, in which deliberations are associated with bottom-up participation emanating from the population.

The need for empirical research on experiences in the implementation of smart city projects has been highlighted by several authors (Meijer, Rodrídguez Bolivar, 2015; Mora, 2018; Lim, Edelenbos and Gianoli, 2019). These works also point out the importance of thinking about the role destined to the residents of urban centers. While Meijer and Rodríguez Bolívar (2015) center the debate on governance, Mora (2018) seems more concerned with the relationship between human factors and technological factors. Lim, Edelenbos and Gianoli (2019) seek to privilege a more comprehensive empirical perspective that is capable of highlighting the positive and negative aspects of smart city experiences, these authors also point out the need for research in cities in emerging countries.

Observing the gaps pointed out by the authors, this research proposes to analyze one of the initiatives linked to the smart city project adopted in Vitória, capital of the state of Espírito Santo. The City Hall of Vitória implemented the *Vitória Online* application, a tool that allows citizens to have access to a wide range of services offered by the city, among them, we highlight health services (medical and dental consultations), vaccination scheduling, access to the school report card of students in the municipal network and information about the schedule of collective buses.

As we are living in a period of the Covid-19 pandemic that requires social isolation measures from society and as public health services are included in the *Vitória Online* application, we see a research opportunity, as the application has the potential to make life easier for its users during this time. To this end, we developed an empirical research that establishes a link between the services offered by the *Vitória Online* app and the experiences of its users in the health service. It should be noted that this tool is part of a smart city experience in an emerging country, which fills the gap pointed out by Lim, Edelenbos, and Gianoli (2019).

With these considerations in mind, we developed the following research problem: how have users of the *Vitória Online* application who use municipal health services perceived the role of this tool during the Covid-19 pandemic period?

It is pertinent that we focus on how much these initiatives transform urban life and to what extent they actually meet the daily needs of citizens. This article adds, therefore, a different approach to the recent tradition of work on smart cities that simply seeks to exalt the positive aspects of the implementation of technological solutions in the routine of urban

center residents, forgetting to problematize points that deserve further study, such as the real needs of city dwellers.

We adopted a qualitative approach with the application of semi-structured interviews with inhabitants of the capital of Espírito Santo who use the "*Vitória Online*" application and the health services offered by the municipality. The data analysis was done through the process of coding the interviews, which allowed interesting findings to emerge: residents declared that they feel closer to the city hall when using the resource, but this proximity turns into frustration when, during the Covid-19 pandemic (which requires social distancing), citizens are forced to go in person to schedule appointments and other health services.

This article is structured as follows: the debate opens with an introduction in which we present some elements and concepts about smart city initiatives and present the phenomenon that will be discussed, then comes the theoretical framework, a section in which we situate readers on the theoretical possibilities for thinking about smart cities. Next, we have a methodological section, in which we present the data collection procedures and explain how the data analysis was elaborated, in the next section we present the results to then discuss them and, finally, elaborate a conclusion of this work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Much has been discussed about smart cities, from definitions that try to associate public management with informational and technological solutions (Alawadhi et. al, 2012; Albino; Berardi & Dangelico, 2015), or even debates about some of its characteristics, such as the intensive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as facilitators for the city to manage issues of mobility, health, education, planning, fostering entrepreneurship, innovation or creativity (Nam & Pardo, 2011; Zygiaris, 2013; Gil-Garcia et al., 2015). We note a predominance in the field of studies that uncritically point to the beneficial effects of the use of technology in the routines of citizens, which leads us to propose a debate on how the use of these resources occurs in the routines of citizens.

A smart city must take into account not only the application of technological solutions, but also combine the importance of planning for the future with the desires of the population (Giffinger et. al, 2007). Smart management, therefore, will be able to understand the possibilities of a smart city and, at the same time, capture the needs of citizens to build an environment that generates opportunities for experiences that contemplate specific contexts and conjunctures: whether the focus is on technology, education, health, security, mobility or economy. Giffinger et. Al (2007) also argue that for a smart city to achieve good

performance, it must guide its decisions and direct efforts by planning for the future ("*forward-looking*") and keeping the focus on economy, population, governance, mobility and housing.

As the topic is recent, there is little consensus on what elements would define what a smart city is (Hollands, 2008; Meijer; Bolivar, 2015; Mora, 2018). Part of the studies opts for a definition centered on technological factors, another part highlights the relevance of human factors (Meijer; Bolivar, 2015). Management models are also treated in opposite ways, and policies implemented from the top down ("*top-down") may gain prominence*, without great popular participation versus the valorization of inclusive measures that start from the bottom up ("*bottom-up*") and include citizens in the decision-making process (Capdevila; Zarlenga, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The qualitative approach is presented as the most appropriate methodological orientation for this work, as it is understood that the phenomenon studied and the researcher interact, and it is not possible to separate one from the other (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Within a subjectivist perspective, with the objective of achieving in-depth results and being able to capture the constructions elaborated by the residents of Vitória in relation to the use of the application, the qualitative research allows a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the identification of the subjective constructions elaborated by the subjects studied (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003) highlights that the qualitative approach allows exploring and understanding meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human phenomena. By trying to interpret the complexity of the context in which the citizen's relationship with *the Vitória Online app* takes place during the period of social isolation, we understand that we are aligned with Creswell's propositions about qualitative approaches.

When trying to answer how the citizen of Vitória uses the *Vitória Online app* during the period of social isolation, the methodological option was to collect data through semi-structured interviews (Spradley, 1979). This choice was made because we understood that the interviews would provide a greater understanding of how the users of the application perceive its function in their lives and verbalize how the relationship with this tool and the health services occurs and develops in the period of social isolation.

Semi-structured scripts allow the interviewer to clarify points that were not clear or that deserve further study during the speech, making it possible to include questions not

foreseen by the initial script (Spradley, 1979). The interviews proved to be relevant so that, through a conversation guided by a script, but at the same time open to the point of opening up to the interviewees the possibility of presenting different points of view about the city and services provided, we could scrutinize how the users of the services perceive the performance of public management in their lives.

In this work, we chose to interview users of the *Vitória Online* application who are served by the municipal health network through services such as vaccine scheduling, remote consultations, face-to-face, among others. We consider that these people already have experiences with the services provided by the municipality and, as a result, it would be possible that throughout the interview there would be moments in which the eventual transformations that occurred due to the insertion of the *Vitória Online application* in their experiences within the capital of Espírito Santo would become clearer.

The choice of the interviewees was due to the fact that the people surveyed already have a relationship with the municipality, have been using the services of the city hall for some time and started to schedule appointments, vaccines or other services through the application after its availability. These characteristics would allow us to perceive whether or not there has been a change in the perception of citizens about the quality of services provided after using the application over time. Another intention was to find out if with the use of the application during the Covid-19 pandemic period, the perception or feeling arose that access to public services remotely implied some sense of greater security during the period of social isolation.

This work, guided by what Alvesson & Sandberg (2011) proposes, aims to fill research gaps within the theme of smart cities. As this is an emerging theme of academic, public and managerial interest, many research possibilities are still open and the activity is pertinent, as a large part of the literature seeks to study the phenomenon from the implementation of policies and leaves in the background or even ignores the role assigned by citizens and service users.

After the planning stage and elaboration of the questions that were asked to the interviewees, data collection began. The interview script was organized according to the format proposed by Spradley (1979) and the questions were separated by blocks that started from more general points to more specific questions: first, questions of a sociodemographic nature were asked, in which the interviewees spoke their name, age, profession and where they live, and then introduced questions that aimed to make the interviewee feel at ease. At first, the user talked about his experience with the application and how he used it in general to, subsequently, address questions about the use of the

application and the perception of the services provided by the municipality. The last block of questions dealt with the relationship between the app and health services. The interviews were done remotely, via *Google Meet*, and one in person: a snowball technique was used from the first contacts she already had.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis began from a series of readings and rereadings of the interviews collected. At this time, different points of view emerged about the services provided by the municipality, as well as the main impressions that users have about the application. In this first stage of interpretation of the raw data, I tried to establish labels to punctuate these moments of the interviewees' speeches, a methodology pertinent to qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). The coding followed the data-based technique, in which the list of codes and labels did not previously exist (Gibbs, 2011). The labels were developed with the objective of elaborating a set of concepts that would be able to provide bases for the theoretical explanations that will follow the study, as proposed by the grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gibbs, 2011). Continuous comparative analyses were adopted as a coding criterion (Glaser & Strauss, 2006).

Analytical and descriptive codes emerged (Gibbs, 2011), such as "the app made life easier", "perceived features of the app", "positive impressions of the app", "services used in the app", "frustration during the pandemic", etc. These labels serve the objective of providing the raw data with a possibility of finding similarities between the events and statements contained in the different interviews, as they are understood as potential indicators of the phenomenon studied (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gibbs, 2011).

After the elaboration of the codes in excerpts from all the interviews, they were cut out and taken to a spreadsheet in order to enable the grouping of the different moments in which each interviewee addressed the same questions. This procedure helps to highlight recurring points in the interviewees' statements and thus find the most relevant themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The constant comparison (Gibbs, 2011) between the statements of the interviewees made it possible to notice common elements raised by the users of the Vitória Online application. Among them, the following deserve to be highlighted: i. the perception that the application has the potential to make life easier for its users; ii. A sense of proximity to the municipality; iii. a high satisfaction with the quality of the services provided by the municipality; iv. the perception that services could be better provided during the Covid-19 pandemic and; V. Frustration with the difficulty of scheduling health services during the period of social isolation.

Having these various moments of the speeches cut and mixed into common codes (categories), the next stage consisted of the elaboration of an open coding, a process that consists of grouping the related codes into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gibbs, 2011), which were: i. residents and cities; ii. first impressions; iii. Benefits of the app; iv. satisfaction and possibilities; v. points to be improved; vi. app failures; vii. frustration.

Once the open coding was completed and the categories were elaborated, the focus was on how they relate to each other and what possible explanation could arise for the proposed problem: "How have users of the Vitória Online application who use municipal health services perceived the role of this tool during the Covid-19 pandemic period?". To this end, the work followed with an axial coding, in which axes of the categories and subcategories are formed, seeking to show how each one of them is related (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These categories are well connected, as residents first establish their first impressions of the application and, as they become familiar with the resource, they begin to demand services, feel needs, perceive potentialities and gaps in the tool.

Finally, I elaborated a selective codification (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gibbs, 2011) in which "frustration" was established as a central category: in all the interviews, the frustration that users have felt due to the limitations of the application's services is very evident, precisely at this moment of social isolation. This feeling of frustration permeates the speeches of health service users and is connected to the various moments experienced by citizens, from the beginning of the use of the application, to the moment when it would be most important, when the population should reduce leaving home as much as possible.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this section we will present excerpts from interviews organized by the categories that were elaborated. These points reveal common characteristics between the interviewees' statements about the topics that were categorized as initially presented in section 3.2 (data analysis), below explanations will be made in greater detail. The excerpts of the statements serve as an illustration for the categories created, as well as support a subsequent theoretical discussion about the ideas that can be associated with the subjects addressed by the interviewees. This method of categorization follows the proposition of Glaser & Strauss (2006), explaining coding criteria through continuous comparative analyses.

PRESENTATION OF CATEGORIES

In summary, we can describe that the interviewees, who are residents of the city of Vitória, through the semi-structured questionnaire, reported their experiences with the municipalities where they have lived and which public services they have used and still use. They also describe their impressions when they get to know the app, elaborate their first impressions of the *app* and note the benefits generated by using the resource. The benefits arising from the use of the application generate a sense of satisfaction, as well as the perception of possibilities of services to be offered. The use of the application also leads users to realize that some points should be improved. The limitations of the application's functionalities during the pandemic period lead users to see flaws and question the future and potential of this innovation. Negative experiences during the pandemic period generate a feeling of frustration among users of the *Vitória Online application*.

Having made this summary of the course of the interviews, we present the categories elaborated from the grouping of codes that dealt with common themes:

i. Residents and city / first impressions: in these excerpts, residents report their experiences with the cities they have lived in, how long they have lived in the capital of ES, which public services they use and verbalize the first impressions they had when they started using the *Vitória* Online application.
ii. Benefits of the app / satisfaction and possibilities: here we gathered the codes with passages in which the citizens report that when using the app, they start to observe a series of benefits that the tool adds to daily life, not only in health services, but also in a variety of services offered by the city of Vitória.
iii. Points to be improved: in these passages, the link between the codes elaborated is in the fact that the use of the *app* is not only made of positive experiences. Citizens also perceive points that could be improved and list demands on what types of services should be contained in the application.
iv. Failures in the application: the common thread between the codes gathered in this category is in the limitations perceived by citizens in the application during the pandemic period. Users start to notice some limitations of the feature at a time when it should expand its functions and possibilities. In this way, these points were classified as "app failures".
v. Frustration: In the pandemic period, when social isolation measures are highly desirable to reduce the proliferation of Sars-Cov-2, the *Vitória Online* app, which could fulfill the role of facilitator for scheduling medical appointments, does exactly the opposite and starts forcing citizens to go in person to health centers

to schedule appointments. This need generates a feeling of frustration about the application and questions about its real functionality.

Frustration assumed the role of a central category, as we believe that this is the one that best responds to the research problem of this work: we evaluate that users of the Vitória Online application who use municipal health services have realized that the role played by this tool during the Covid-19 pandemic period has been highly limited, when what is expected from an initiative of this type would perform the opposite function: it should bring public health services closer to their users through the use of the world wide web and applications for mobile phones.

THE VOICES OF THE CITIZENS

At this stage of the work, we will highlight some excerpts from the citizens' speeches in which the aspects grouped in each of the categories stand out. This section aims to give voice to citizens. It also helps us to begin to understand how they perceive the performance of the City of Vitória through the *Vitória Online* application so that we can then respond to the research problem proposed in this work.

The first category, "residents and city / first impressions", fulfills the role of being an introductory stage. After the interviewees introduce themselves and report their socioeconomic conditions, they begin to describe their experiences in other cities, how long they have lived in the capital of Espírito Santo and tell their first impressions when they get to know the Vitória Online application.

The first contact with the application, in general, is a moment of discovery and the interviewees usually report experiences beyond the use of health services, as is the case of Helena, an employee of the administrative sector of a large employee, who says that the application is interesting and has various functionalities in a single digital channel, such as: "regarding school, even with that *bike*, I have even used the *Vitória bike*, not through the *Vitória Online application*, but through the *bike*, but I found it interesting to have a single channel". It is worth contrasting that Neuza, a nanny and student of the technical nursing course, said that she downloaded the application, but "I found it very complicated, so I deleted [the application]. Oh, I prefer to go to the station and ask the girl to make an appointment for me."

When listing the positive points, users of the application usually list the various features of the tool and the feeling of proximity to the city hall that arises from the use. Helena says that the digital presence of the city hall is capable of "bringing all citizens closer to the city hall channel", she also argues that the tool is able to "bring together and

facilitate the work, both of the city hall and of those who receive the provision of service". Joana, who is a journalist, says that "the app makes me have more access, be more connected to things that I would have had to look for in other spaces before."

As for the points to be improved, issues often arise involving the quality of the service provided, the absence of greater transparency in information, whether in the disclosure of vacancies for vaccination against Covid-19, or in the allocation of resources for each of the municipality's portfolios. Neuza says that she was not well advised at the health center about vaccination and, despite having a comorbidity (hypertension), she was told that she would not be entitled to the vaccine, only becoming aware of this right through a conversation with her employer.

Helena feels the need for greater integration of transparency features with the app: "(...) the issue of transparency: how much the municipality receives to be allocated to health and how much it spends, which is that transparency portal". Odete, a retiree who does not have health insurance and routinely attends municipal health centers, says that the scheduling for vaccination against Covid-19 should be clearer: "I think it should be like this: the number of people scheduled is 90, 90. It's 200, 200. Because that way it keeps blocking the system for both us and them."

The category called "application failures" brings together negative experiences with the use of the resource, the most recurrent being the impossibility of scheduling a medical appointment through the application, which forces users to go to the health center during the Covid-19 pandemic period, which provides for social isolation as a non-pharmacological measure to prevent contamination by the Corona virus. According to Odete, "sometimes there were a lot of people, there weren't so many people because the time was seven o'clock and not everyone wakes up early. But if you go there after an hour, it's like this [gestures with her hands to show that she's full]". Romário, a civil servant at a city hall in the metropolitan region of the capital, has contradictory feelings, says that he needs to look for blood pressure control drugs for his father and that he misses a service of this type through the application, but he was happy to have been able to schedule the Covid-19 vaccination of his father and mother through the online scheduling system of the City of Vitória.

Frustration is a recurring feeling among users of the Vitória Online application and it arises, mainly, from the need to go to health centers to schedule medical appointments. The difficulty in scheduling vaccination also contributes to this feeling. Joana points out that "the health service did not act in the same way [to facilitate routines], given that we had to leave home to make an appointment."

We could see a similar feeling in almost all the other interviews, Romário says that "for me it doesn't make sense for us to have to go there [at the health center]", while Joana adds: "but all this could be done through the app too!". Odete tries to be more understanding, but a feeling of frustration also stands out in moments of her speeches: "but, as we are going through this phase, it requires first, it's patience!". Helena even questions how the development of the services provided by the application will be: "I'm not even sure about it [if improvements will continue to happen]".

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The interviews with users of the Vitória Online application who also use the municipality's public health system help us to think about the smart city project implemented in the capital of Espírito Santo. Technological resources are being adopted in the urban routines of citizens, but there still seems to be a gap in terms of a service that is actually aimed at the user.

If we think about smart cities from approaches that highlight the relevance of ICT (information and communication technologies) in everyday life and in solving mobility, security or health problems, it would be possible to argue that the city of Vitória has indeed become a *smart city*. However, the tool analyzed in this study presented important limitations, when the opposite was expected.

For Hollands (2008), smart solutions in cities often have more of an intention to associate management with a label of innovative than to actually meet the demands and real needs of the municipality. When comparing this author's statements with the findings of this research, we could observe that the Vitória Online application, which has enormous potential to collaborate with social isolation measures, proved to be a resource that generated feelings of frustration and questions about the future of this initiative, leaving the impression that the application fulfills more an institutional function of publicizing the management brand than the role of meeting the demands of citizens.

The attention given to the residents of the city of Vitória through the application has facilitated the routine in numerous aspects, such as mobility, access to the school report card via cell phone and scheduling appointments without having to leave home (before the pandemic), but the relationship between citizens and the municipality remains unchanged in relation to decision-making: The application is available, but its functionalities are defined by the management and do not seem to suit the needs of its users: just when remote scheduling of appointments is most necessary, the option is no longer offered. For Capdevila & Zarlenga (2015), smart cities need to combine measures that come from the

top down with others that come from the bottom up, but the reports of the interviewees show that these needs are not receiving due attention.

CONCLUSION

Given the intensification of urban concentrations and the growing presence of technology in our lives, it is feasible to assume that smart cities are a booming phenomenon and that it will also follow the trend of intensification of urban life. This article sought to explore the theme from a prism that is less adopted in the academic debate: we sought to establish the focus of the analysis on the users of public services provided by the municipality.

We discussed the smart city from a specific tool, the *Vitória Online* application, from the perspective of the users of this system. Through this excerpt, we could observe that this initiative brings potential for increased practicality and greater satisfaction for citizens, but when the service is implemented without the needs of users being consulted, we can observe a feeling contrary to that expected by the public management: instead of satisfaction, there is a feeling of frustration due to the impossibility of having access to services understood as viable, possible and necessary.

The Vitória Online application, which among its functions, was able to schedule medical and dental appointments (and help people avoid leaving home), stopped making remote appointments during the period of social isolation. This brought a feeling of frustration to the users of the application, because at a time when it is necessary to reduce social interactions in person, a device that has the ability to play an auxiliary role in this mission, adopts measures in the opposite direction.

Complaints about the need to schedule medical appointments in person at health centers in the municipal network – during a period when it is desirable to stay at home – were recurrent. The qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews was able to capture the dissatisfaction generated with this issue and helps to illustrate how a public policy can be implemented in different ways. While the municipality does not explain the reason for the need for face-to-face appointments, users of the application feel frustrated and are not within the radar of management decision-making.

The observation of this phenomenon helps to illustrate the importance of a governance model in which decisions are not taken only as "*top-down"* measures, in which managers unilaterally decide how public policies will be adopted, but with "*bottom-up"* models, a format that consists of including citizens in the public debate so that decisions are able to better meet public desires and needs.

It should be noted that, although it was not the object of the research, there were also recurrent manifestations about the fairness and transparency of the scheduling process for vaccination against Covid-19. Often the citizens could not get vacancies and did not know how the vaccine distribution process took place. Throughout the work, the question arose that the digital scheduling process can, instead of including and bringing the citizen closer to public management, generate a process of selectivity by socioeconomic criteria: only city residents who have access to the computer network can schedule appointments for the scarce vaccines available in the country so far. One of the interviewees, who works as a nanny, verbalized that she was informed at the health center that she, with a comorbidity, could not be vaccinated on that date, but, when she commented on the case with her employer, she managed to get her to schedule a time for her to be vaccinated.

The theme of smart cities is extensive and comprehensive, in this research we chose to make a cut about one of the initiatives linked to the project of a municipality: the *Vitória Online* application. This excerpt helped us to understand how citizens have understood the role of the tool and, consequently, of the project, in their lives.

New possibilities for empirical research are open and the topic is far from being exhausted. We assess that users of the *Vitória Online application* who use municipal health services, in this period of social isolation, are not perceiving the application as a facilitating tool, but rather as an instrument that generates frustrations and does not deliver services that would generate convenience, and consequently, greater satisfaction to citizens.

We conclude by pointing out that it seems difficult to think of smart cities within a context in which the governance model is little focused on the inclusion of citizens, with low incentive for their participation and real attention to their needs. A Brazilian smart city needs to face the challenges of low popular participation in the public agenda and develop policies that are formulated from the bottom up, in which the citizen is an integral part of the governance process.

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