

Many shades of smart: How to harness technology towards more inclusive cities

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“Pulling Glass”

- William Mitchell does not need to go to work...
- Or does he?



Early smart city debates

- Early enthusiasm about spatial transcendence overshadowed by research showing increase in face-to-face interaction due to higher rates of communication
- Urban agglomeration and consolidation
- Techno-parks and innovation clusters
- Little work on global South
- South Africa: developmental focus that coincided with local government restructuring



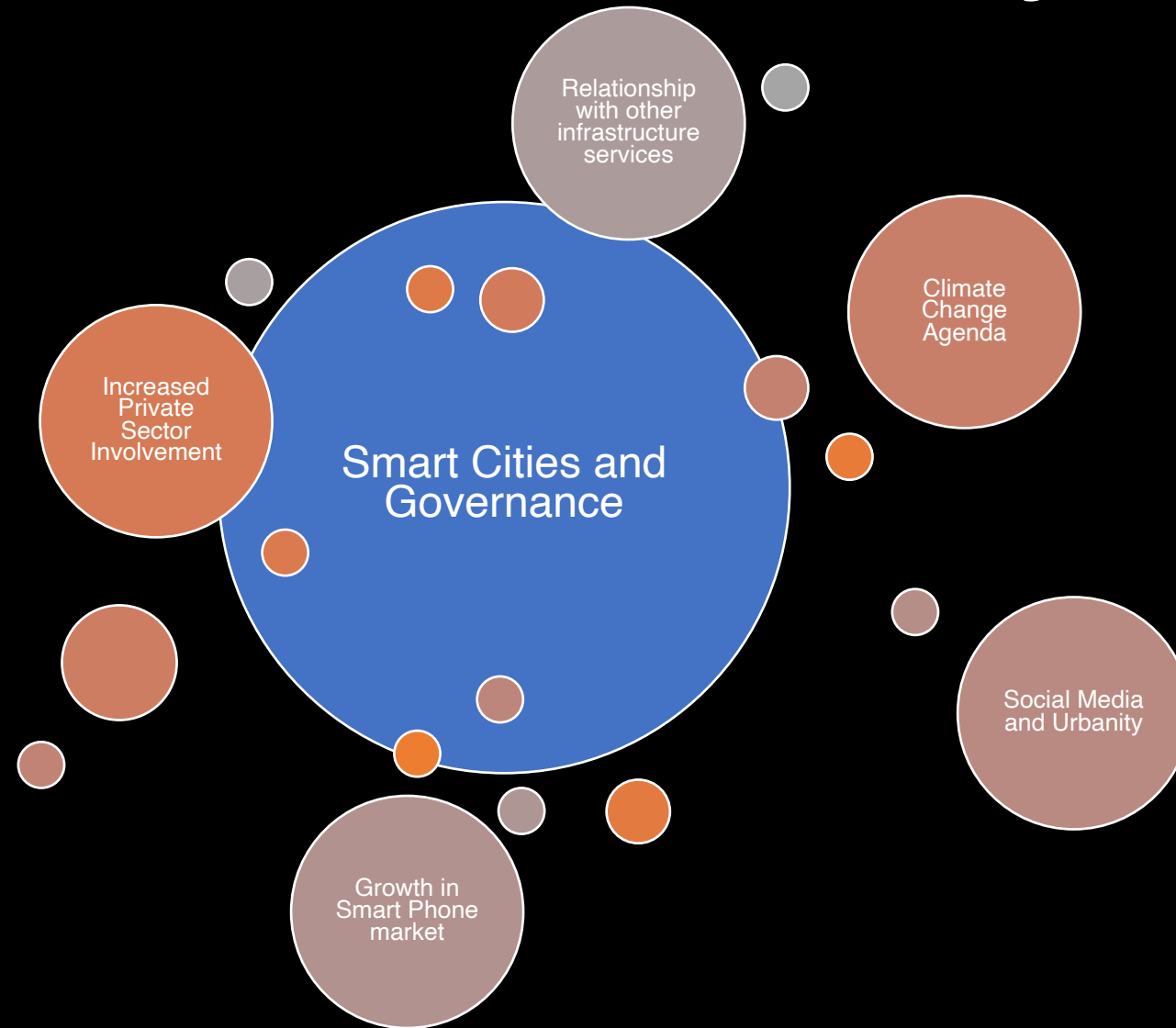
Smart City V. 02

(...the lifecycle of technology is now
measured in months.)
Townsend, 2014: 134

- Smart Phone Growth
- Web 2.0 to the dominance of social media
- The promise of the Arab Spring
- The transition to wireless and fiber
- The Internet of Things
- Big Data



Beyond the smart city





Smart urbanism in Africa

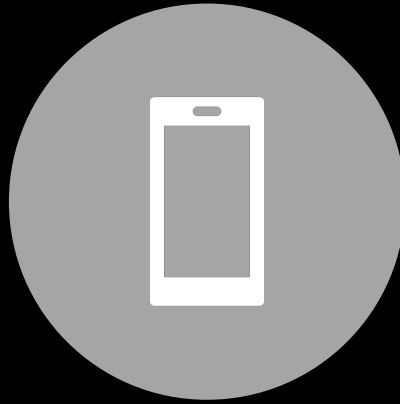
- Mix of old and new
- Smart technologies entangled with livelihoods and lifestyles
- Incorporated into urban practices
- Hybrid
- What is shaping cities though, are not the technologies *per se*, but the interface between technology and users



Three dimensions to the relationship between Platform Urbanism and space




PLATFORMS AS
INFRASTRUCTURE



PLATFORMS AND SPACE



PLATFORM URBANISM
AND AGENCY



“Read-write urbanism”

- “Engaging with platform services is today an integral part of being an urban citizen and as such involves many different kinds of value-sharing, not only the value extracted by technology companies.”
- (Barns 2019: 576)



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Mobility and para-transit

SafeBoda

- Ugandan ride-hailing app for motor-cycle taxis (boda bodas)
- 2015, founded in Kampala by Ugandan
- Safety and efficiency: "professionalise boda riders"
- Expansion: package delivery, sale of airtime, delivery of medicine, delivery of food from local vendors



Mobility

BebaBeba

- Ride hailing service formed by the Drivers and Partners Association of Kenya (DPAK)
- “like Uber, we started on the street, not the office”
- Driver-owned ride-hail app
- Diversification (owner car hire schemes and bespoke tours)



Food security

TWIGA Foods



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Twiga Foods now sets sights on East, West African markets

Towards a more hopeful interpretation of Platform Urbanism (and smart cities)

- The importance of place - embeddedness and situatedness
- Differentiated services have enhanced heterogeneity but not necessarily addressed structural inequalities
- The many uncharted futures of platform urbanism are functions of the relations between algorithms, people and place.
- Platforms evolve can manifest in unpredictable and generative ways

