

# **STS Conference Graz 2015 “CRITICAL ISSUES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY STUDIES”**

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GRAZ, AUSTRIA

*Session 17 “DE-CONSTRUCTING THE SMART CITY, REASSEMBLING URBAN LIFE”*

## **‘Smart’ Global South Cities**

### ***Will they really leapfrog?***

In 21st Century urban planning, the term ‘smart cities’ is frequently bandied about. It’s the ultimate urban utopia of many policy-makers in the UK and elsewhere in the West. These are mainly data-driven cities where, through innovative ICTs, citizens feed the cities’ databases with raw data about how they live, work, play, what they need, and what they want, and the super-computing city responds by providing the required services efficiently and (presumably) fairly.

There are two problems with this objective, as it is currently formulated. Firstly, a smart city doesn’t necessarily require that its citizens are meaningfully engaged, and fairly treated. Rather, it follows the utilitarian principle. And secondly, there are vast swathes of urban areas in the majority world that are infrastructurally ‘underdeveloped’ and economically excluded from the smart city mechanism, meaning that until such infrastructure is established, either governments alternative models of service-delivery and citizen engagement must be found.

The driving questions to explore in this presentation therefore are a) are there ideas and mechanisms within the smart cities agenda that are available to infrastructurally and economically excluded urban areas in the Global South? b) what local information and communications technologies can facilitate both better urban planning and service delivery, and representative citizen engagement in these communities?

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