SSH16-05 - Summer School - Smart Cities, Designing Places and Urban Mentalities

Zusammenfassung

The promise of the Smart City is seductive. The European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities argues there are opportunities for "linking and upgrading infrastructures, technologies and services in key urban sectors (transport, buildings, energy, ICT) in a smart way [that] will improve quality of life, competitiveness and sustainability of our cities". The City of Vienna too has embarked on an ambitious Smart City Wien initiative e.g., as exemplified in the Smart City Seestadt Aspern project. Perhaps because technology is the key enabler, Smart City rhetoric often presents technology-dominated utopian visions of societal transformations. These visions hide the many choices that are made in technology development that fundamentally shape what sorts of transformations can happen. In the context of city-scale distributed infrastructures, issues such as communication networks, protocols and Big Data have implications both for privacy, identity and data protection for individuals, as well as for how such structures can be monitored and governed across sector boundaries by the city. In the context of the citizen-facing applications, incorporating e.g., Smart Sensors, ICT-devices, pervasive displays, there are issues about what sorts of applications people want, how social interaction and collective mentalities are transformed, and what new forms of community they enable. Urban development in the future is not only depending on different kind of smart technologies in housing, mobility and daily life but also on people`s handling and use of these products and services. It is also as much about the people in urban environments as it is about technological innovation and devices.

Thus technology alone is not sufficient for realising 'good' societal transformations that serve the people of the city. The input from multi-disciplinary perspectives is needed to understand what technologies are needed and how are they best designed, what applications will be useful, what new forms of city governance are required and so on. However, current research on Smart Cities often takes place within disciplinary and even sub-disciplinary silos. To date, socio-technical innovation seems to assign future urban governance and private markets to solve the demographic, ecological and societal transition. Further, there is a lack of knowledge about how information and communication technologies are influencing people in everyday urban life. Technology development proceeds without fully understanding the people within these rapidly developing structures. Socialscience research is often more concerned with commenting on, rather than shaping, technology developments. If we are to have the 'right' sort of technological innovation in the future, Smart Cities have to take into account the duality of technology as the product of human action and also as structural properties that enable and constrain human action.

The aim of this Summer School then is to bring together diverse disciplines – including technical, economic, political, environmental and social disciplines – to explore the new set of relationships between society and technology, people and data entailed in the Smart City vision and contribute to a better understanding of processes transforming urban spaces. This Summer School will bring together multiple perspectives and multiple stakeholders in a new research ecology, where social science gains an active role in designing and steering the ongoing technological shift. The aim is a better understanding about how Smart City technologies establish new urban patterns by using digital internet devices and products in housing, communities or cities, and on how ICT innovations in urban contexts affect not only mentalities, social interaction but also social structures and particularly the process of designing places. In the process of designing places for future urban development, the role of technological implementation is important for how social actors communicatively construct places and how spatial identities are developed in communications and social

interactions between inhabitants. For urban planners, technologists or developers, as well as urban sociologists, geographers or cultural studies, it is critically important to gain knowledge about the impacts of Smart City technologies on urban space and how different techno-socio-spatial conditions potentially transform social interaction and collective mentalities. For ICT researchers, such insights can influence their implementation choices as not only being limited to the engineering and design perspectives, but also impacting social life, creating both new opportunities and also possibly new problems.

Thus the Smart City theme of this Summer School is timely and significant in connecting with major contemporary initiatives in society and research because this sort of socio-technical perspective is becoming increasingly important for day-to-day life. Through an interdisciplinary perspective and dialogue, a collective vision of Smart Cities and the future urban development can be achieved. We will debate new social configurations and spatial patterns in neighbourhoods through the interaction with new ICTs, applications or devices. We will build bridges between different disciplinary perspectives needed to create and understand Smart Cities that can connect with human values and experience.

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https://www.wwtf.at/funding/programmes/past/ssh/SSH16-05/