Unobtrusive, Seductive and Profound?
The Silent Transformation of Mobility in the Region of Stuttgart

M. Heckel
21st International Conference on Urban Planning and Regional Development in the Information Society GeoMultimedia 2016

Student of MSc Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design (IUSD)
University of Stuttgart & Ain Shams University Cairo
Outline

Concepts

The ‘smart city’

Influential ideas

Traits of becoming ‘smart’

‘polygo’ in Stuttgart: the modest ‘smart city’

Description

Aspects: unobtrusive, seductive, profound?

Conclusion and Outlook
Concepts
Different readings of the concept ‘smart city’.

- Advocates
  - Competitive and efficient cities
  - Sustainability and resilience
  - Big data for informing (and making) decisions
Different readings of the concept ‘smart city’.

• Advocates
  • Competitive and efficient cities
  • Sustainability and resilience
  • Big data for informing (and making) decisions

• Critics
  • Advertisement delusion: nothing new
  • Neutrality and ethics of algorithms
  • Corporatised governance
  • Inequalities and centralisation
  • Insecurities and vulnerabilities
How the term is understood in this presentation/paper.

Understanding

• Technologically: deployment of ICT
• Pragmatically: incremental development and improvement of existing structures
How the term is understood in this presentation/paper.

Understanding

- Technologically: deployment of ICT
- Pragmatically: incremental development and improvement of existing structures

Context

- Existing cities
- Developed countries
Influences of Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurialism.

Neoliberalism

- Market economy and minimal state
- Self-organising society
- Importance of urban areas
Influences of Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurialism.

Neoliberalism

- Market economy and minimal state
- Self-organising society
- Importance of urban areas

Entrepreneurialism

- Creating competitive environments
- External forces affecting cities (inter-urban competition)
- Preference for isolated developments
Influences of Cybernetics.

Cybernetics

- Self-stabilisation of communicating nodes
- Stateless society of globally connected communities
- Solving politics on global scale
- By 1980s and 1990s technology available: ‘The Internet’
Traits of becoming ‘smart’
Which qualities describe the process of becoming smart?

Three aspects of the process of existing cities becoming ‘smart’:

• Unobtrusiveness
• Seductiveness
• Profoundness (?)
Hidden in plain sight: Unobtrusiveness.

- Black boxes: restricted access and complexity
- Piecemeal assembly: seeing the bigger picture is hard
- Matter of course: presence is not noticed
• Growth, improved services, reduced costs
• Sustainability and resilience
• Citizen involvement
• Alluring for both
  • Local government and administration
  • Citizens and users
Big data, big scope: Profoundness?

- Affecting all sectors
- Power and control becomes:
  - More centralised
  - Automated
  - Expanded: ‘impotentiality’
- Increase in quantity makes change in quality
- Intensifying polarisation
- Technological fix changes morals (e.g. SCP)
- Lack of public deliberation
‘polygo’ in Stuttgart: the modest ‘smart city’
‘polygo’: the concept

• ‘Smart mobility’ concept

• Partially funded by German government (“Schaufenster Elektromobilität”)

• ‘Smart city’ concept next to promotion of e-mobility

• Strengthening competitiveness and image of Stuttgart
Incremental implementation:

- 2012: “Mobilpass”
- 2014: User field test
- 2015: brand ‘polygo’
- 2016: gradual transition of public transport subscriptions
Incremental implementation and partners

Incremental implementation:

- 2012: “Mobilpass”
- 2014: User field test
- 2015: brand ‘polygo’
- 2016: gradual transition of public transport subscriptions

Partners:

- Mobility related: public transport, car- and bike-sharing
- Further partners for additional functions
- Local technology companies and research institutions
The unobtrusive aspect: Smartening up behind the scenes.

- Add-on: additional possibility to access services (except VVS)
- Unobtrusive (and frictionless) by design
- Developed by private partners
The seductive aspect: the allure of ‘smartness’.

- Sustainability: environmentally friendly mobility
- Competitiveness and growth: local economy
- Competition: improving image of city/region
- “One card for everything”
The profound aspect: “milestone” towards new culture of mobility?

Profound change in mobility?

- Cooperation existed before
- Partners slow in joining campaign
- Tighter integration may only benefit existing users in rare cases
The profound aspect: “milestone” towards new culture of mobility?

Profound change in mobility?

• Cooperation existed before
• Partners slow in joining campaign
• Tighter integration may only benefit existing users in rare cases

Any profound?

• Opting out difficult or impossible
Conclusion and Outlook
Conclusion

• Transition to ‘smart city’ is unobtrusive and seductive
• It is potentially profound, especially given the first two aspects
• Transformation easily lacks public deliberation and participation
Staying dumb, the smart thing to do?

Conclusion

• Transition to ‘smart city’ is unobtrusive and seductive
• It is potentially profound, especially given the first two aspects
• Transformation easily lacks public deliberation and participation

Outlook

• Projects like ‘polygo’ an imperative to keep ‘smart city’ public?
• Trade-off between secrecy and security?
• Profoundness real?
• Cybernetic dream becoming reality?