

Data and Urban Governance: Governing the Digital City

The Report

The workshop was organised by the LEWI Research Centre (Social Science Faculty) and the CGPC (Comparative Governance and Policy Research Centre) on the occasion of the visit of Professor Patrick le Galès, Sciences Po, under the Dr Kennedy Wong Distinguished Visiting Professor Scheme.



Photo: *from left to right:* Dr Kevin Lo, Geography department, HKBU, Acting Director of LEWI; Dr Daphne Mah, Geography department, HKBU; Professor Patrick le Galès, Sciences Po, Dr Kennedy Wong Distinguished Visiting Professor; Dr Kevin Ip, Government and International Studies department, HKBU; Professor Alistair Cole, Head of the Government and International Studies department, HKBU; Mr Alfred Sit, former Secretary for Innovation and Technology, HKSAR Government, advisor to President vice-chancellor

Alex Wai; Dr Winnie Tang, Founder and Chairman of Esri China (Hong Kong) Limited, Founder and Honorary President of the Smart City Consortium; Dr Wong Chun Kau (Jolly), Visiting Professor for the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (School of Telecommunications Management), Shanghai University (Smart City Institute), and Macau University of Science and Technology (Faculty of Innovation Engineering) and Professor William Cheung, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programmes) and Professor, Department of Computer Science

Council Chamber, 24th March 2023

Overall Presentation

Cities are growing a “digital skin,” consisting of sensor-filled urban spaces that make them into giant data-generating platforms. This data-generating environment is combined with ubiquitous computing, big data and machine learning. As cities become smarter, we will see many improvements in operating infrastructure, optimizing urban service provision, and revolutionizing urban transportation, from autonomous vehicles to small-scale personal transport. These exciting opportunities are generating complex unintended feedbacks that are technological, infrastructural, governmental, and ethical. In addition, the digital skin is changing the nature of the city as a system of face-to-face interaction. Thanks to their smartphones, individuals are generating their own digital footprints, which contain information about their behavior that is greedily stockpiled by the companies in the new digital economy. The digitization of our cities is not solely the result of technological progress. This phenomenon must also be analyzed in relation to recent changes in the global political economy. Data is viewed by some as the new “black gold”. The appearance of big data has proved to be disruptive, turning certain sectors upside down, altering value chains, and sorely testing the instruments used to regulate economic development in the urban context.

The workshop considered major dimensions of the 4th Industrial Revolution in cities: the digital re-enactment of urban life; the algorithmic management of cities and their people; the unintended consequences of sophisticated predictive management tools. This workshop combine these questions around governing the digital city with findings from related recent and ongoing HKBU projects on: “The role of Big Data Analytics in promoting smart low-carbon cities” (Research Impact Fund R2002-20F, PI: Daphne Mah); “Trust and the Smart City” (RC-FNRA-IG/19-20/SOSC/01, PI: Alistair Cole), and “Social Justice for the Information Age: Towards a Political Theory of Datafication” (General Research Fund 12615622, PI: Kevin Ip). A final roundtable, chaired by Alfred Sit, JP, brought together workshop participants with stakeholders from government and the private sector.

Programme

13.00-13.30 Welcome

13.30-14.00 Introductions to the Workshop

Professor Yang Chun, Professor of Geography and Associate Dean for Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, HKBU

Professor William Cheung, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programmes) and Professor, Department of Computer Science

14.00-14.45 *Governing the Digital City*

Speaker: Professor Patrick le Galès

Chair Dr Kevin Lo, Department of Geography and Acting Director of LEWI

14.45-15.00 Break

15.00- 16.15 *Trust and the Smart City*

‘The role of Big Data Analytics in promoting smart low-carbon cities’

Dr Daphne Mah

‘Trust and the Smart City’

Professor Alistair Cole

‘Social Justice for the Information Age: Towards a Political Theory of Datafication’


Dr Kevin Ip

16.15-16.30 Break

16.30-17.30 *Roundtable panel discussion*

Chaired by Alfred Sit, former Secretary for Innovation and Technology, HKSAR Government.

Participants:

 Professor Patrick le Gales, Sciences Po, Dr Kennedy Wong Visiting Professor

- ✚ Professor Alistair Cole, Professor and Head of the Government and International Studies department, HKBU
- ✚ Dr Daphne Mah, Associate Professor, Geography department HKBU and Director of the Asian Energy Centre
- ✚ Dr Wong Chun Kau (Jolly), Visiting Professor for the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (School of Telecommunications Management), Shanghai University (Smart City Institute), and Macau University of Science and Technology (Faculty of Innovation Engineering)
- ✚ Dr Winnie Tang, Founder and Chairman of Esri China (Hong Kong) Limited; Founder and Honorary President of the Smart City Consortium.