



THE 'DIGITALISING STATE' SYMPOSIUM

September 4-5, 2023

UCL

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE

'Planning Regional Futures: What role should digitalisation and digital planning play?'

John Harrison – Loughborough University, UK

Planning regional futures reflects on the demise of traditional forms of top-down, one-size-fits-all, institutionalised regional planning. It is an outlook which does not seek to defend or try to reclaim what has been lost with the decline of institutionalised forms of regional planning but is motivated by forging new ways of planning regional futures. In this spirit, the paper starts with the following provocation: if digitalisation and urbanisation are (the) defining features of 21st century society, why are major international policies such as the New Urban Agenda so quiet on the matter? The NUA simply states this: "We commit ourselves to adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization" (§66) (notably the only mention of 'smart' in the whole document) along with "The use of digital platforms and tools ... will be encouraged to improve long-term integrated urban and territorial planning and design, land administration and management, and access to urban and metropolitan services" (§156). We argue that the problem centres on a clash between 'new' urban agendas (e.g. digitalisation, urbanisation, networked, smart, building cities from the internet up, agile, dynamic) and 'old'-style regional planning (territorial, top-down, long-term, hierarchical). In the final part of the paper, we call for a new planning of regions based on the skills required for planning regional futures and outline what role digitalisation and digital planning should play.

PAPER SESSION 1

'Spatio-temporalities of the digitalising state'

'Timing the digitalising state'



Ayona Datta and Fenna Hoefsloot – University College London

This paper proposes to examine the digitalising state (Datta, 2022) through the lens of time, temporality and timing. The main question driving this paper is - How do global south states use timing as a form of statecraft? We argue that the digitalising state is built upon the 'time-image' (Deleuze, 1989) of power, whereby particular processes, transactions and infrastructures of the state are subordinated to the temporal rhythms of information flows. Although Deleuze's work on the time-image focuses specifically on film, we use this concept to analyse the digitalising state as interlinked images of temporal power. We analyse these time-images across three interlinked spaces: bureaucracy, policy, and planning. Through these spaces we focus on time-image as an essential tool of digital statecraft, which manifests in the ways that the state creates images of past, present, or future time through a technological rationality. The digitalising state itself emerges here as a time-image of appropriation, where temporalities are intersected by the legacies of colonialism, slavery, modernist planning, and images of technological progress.

'Downscaling climate knowledge, upscaling urban governance, reshaping the state'

Claudio Coletta – University of Bologna, Italy

Urban areas serve as both accelerators of the Anthropocene and testing grounds for advanced forms of adaptation and mitigation, with urban managers and practitioners increasingly using climate data in their planning processes (Bierbaum et al., 2013), somehow replicating the advocacy coalitions formed around the smart city development processes (Kitchin et al., 2017). As Edwards (2016) highlights, however, the current global climate knowledge digital infrastructure faces challenges in "downscaling" and meeting the demands of city, county, and state agencies, as well as various non-governmental organizations. Downscaling involves in fact a local recalibration of a global system of knowledge production, circulation, and validation designed to comprehend weather patterns at different scales.

Simultaneously, in line with the urban-centered and mission-oriented approach, particularly within the European Union, cities are taking the lead in the Green Deal implementation towards climate neutrality by 2050. This has led to the emergence of a market for corporate climate intelligence solutions that provide data-informed knowledge for decision-making in cities, with the promise to fill the "downscaling gap" between global knowledge and local needs. For instance, Google's Environmental Insight Explorer (EIE) is an increasingly used climate platform solution for cities, providing environmental intelligence services at the urban level to accelerate decision-making for climate-neutral strategies. Likewise, Climate View is a Swedish company that produces a "Climate OS" to support the climate transition management of cities.



In this paper, I argue that these corporate climate intelligence solutions or "climate platforms" produce a different form of downscaling than the one described by Edwards, leveraging changes in EU climate and multilevel governance, and yet creating temporal frictions between the real-time management of cities, the long term of mission-oriented approaches, and the deep time of planetary climate knowledge. While knowledge is downscaled in cities by repurposing the smart urbanism apparatus and its forms of governmentality, governance is upscaled through the increasing role of global city networks. The heterogeneous forms of networked urban governance for climate, combined with the adoption of climate platforms are reconfiguring discourses of climate change with an emphasis on experimentation as a means to deal with open ended processes and uncertainty of the future (Castan-Broto, 2017). While the focus is on the future of cities and their missions, the future of Nation State appears more fragile, consistently with Sassen's theory (2006), who contends that authority is no longer exclusively concentrated within the Nation-State but is distributed across various actors and institutions, such as supranational organizations, global governance networks, and non-state actors that wield significant authority and influence. At the same time though, as power becomes increasingly transnational and Nation States power wanes within the new climatic regime, cities as single entities are also softer and more exposed to the action of corporate actors and advocacy coalitions than Nation States, and that is the entry point for the increasing adoption of corporate climate platforms and intelligence solutions.

'Digitalization and urban peripheries: evidence from Beersheba'

Oren Yiftachel, Hagit Keysar, and Mohamad Mohamad - University of Ben Gurion, Israel

Traditional urban spatial planning has to date largely ignored the rapid digitalisation of cities. Yet, there is little doubt that fundamental social change is in the making in most urban regions. The paper builds on the concept of *urban digital citizenship* to ask: Can there be a smart *and* just city? can the digitisation reduce inequality, data colonisation and displacement and promote social justice? Can the immense power of digitalisation be harnessed by marginalised social groups? In what ways does digitalisation impact urban issues such as informal 'gray' spaces, undocumented migration and minority recognition?

For this end, the paper examines the actual consequences of rapid digitisation in the growing Beersheba metropolitan region, Israel. The peripheral southern city is composed mainly of Jewish immigrants of various ethnicities and indigenous Bedouin-Arab population. This city was recently declared 'the cyber capital' of Israel. This has propelled the injection of massive funds, the relocation of new ICT military facilities, and the introduction of several development plans for a 'smart city'. Our project examines these digitalisation policies using a newly devised methodology



we term *DIEP impact*, focusing on four key dimensions: data, infrastructure, economic-social and political.

The findings are mixed: digitalisation has improved *service delivery* significantly for most residents, but at the same time widened the digital divide and *displaceabilities* particularly in the indigenous 'periphery of the periphery'. It has also spawned substantial *privatisation* of control over services and data collection. Digitalisation has also enhanced central security controls and surveillance, as well as state efforts to *colonise* indigenous spaces, at the same time, it also enabled the Bedouin tribes to survive in the new settings, *organise and mobilise* against state policies. These findings point to inherent difficulties in developing inclusive urban digital citizenship, and to tensions in simultaneously promoting both 'smart' and just city. Yet, the potential of digital tools to work for greater inclusion and equality exists where there is political and professional will.

KEYNOTE

'Moonwalking into the Future'

Manu Luksch - Royal College of Arts, UK

Networked computation brings convenience and empowerment, but also exposes us to continuous surveillance and algorithmic management. How can art interrogate this data environment to produce compelling critique and engaging experience? What forms of resistance remain effective in the face of the massive concentration of predictive power?

Senegalese rappers, executives at Cisco, and queen of the silver screen Tilda Swinton – these are just some of the voices that inhabit my works, which interrogate archives, regimes and processes in networked society. Concretely, I craft interdisciplinary approaches to identify critical points and latent contradictions in political and technological architectures, to then pivot these systems against themselves.

In this talk, I will illustrate my practice using a range of works with a focus on corporate-governmental relationships in the algorithmic city including *Third Quarterly Report*, a critique of the smart city industries and the creeping takeover of urban infrastructure by the world's largest IT companies, it was filmed during a period of unprecedented access to global financial meetings of Cisco System's Smart+Connected Communities wing; and *Algo-Rhythm*, a hip hop musical on electioneering and voter micro-targeting shot in Dakar; and the speculative fiction film *FACELESS*, compiled from surveillance recordings recovered under data protection legislation.



PAPER SESSION 2

'The digitalising state in its tangible way: examples from the global South'

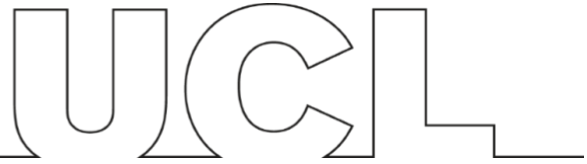
'Dissecting digitalising states: Juxtaposing the use of digital artefacts in Cape Town, South Africa and Geneva, Switzerland'

Saskia Greyling and Jennifer Barella - University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Digitalisation is driven by the integration of digital artefacts into various sectors, processes which aim to speed up and extend equitable governance decision-making in public administration. However, the choice of, use, impact, and meanings of digital artefacts varies significantly across contexts. Digital artefacts are shaped, for instance, by economic conditions, information infrastructures, the policies, and the cultural and organisational norms in which they are situated and applied across the global north and south. In this paper, we examine the state's work in imagining and implementing digital processes in Cape Town and Geneva, two places with different historical and present contexts (geographical, cultural, organisational), which offers a level of complexity to an understanding of what digitalisation encompasses.

The digitalising state in Cape Town has a long and often complicated history of datafication and governing through numbers, used to implement racial segregation under apartheid and to redress this legacy in the post-apartheid period through the democratic state's redistributive social justice agenda. Digitalisation processes and digital artefacts in particular are increasingly implemented to ensure transparency, bureaucratic commitment to due process, and to improve public engagement with the state and its decision-making processes. In contrast, the digitalising state in Geneva builds on a strong decades-long drive for geo-datafication for urban governance within public administration. The development of advanced e-government services, digitisation of administrative procedures, and the use of digital platforms for citizen interaction and participation are built on an incrementally implemented informational governance infrastructure made up of a series of key digital tools.

Our juxtaposition of the adoption and use of digital artefacts for digitalisation in these two contexts, allow us to explore how digital artefacts are pieced together (rather than pre-packaged), how they land in context, and the ways they are (re)shaped by the actors who design and draw on them within state organisations. Through this analysis, we show how digitalising state(s) are situated in context, in particular spaces and times, with associated opportunities,



limitations, rationales and implications that drive their implementation, use, and traction. Through the juxtaposition of the confluences and dissonances of the use of digital artefacts in these cases, we contribute to calls to understand the complexity of digitalisation and the state's role in it.

'Embedding the digitalising state in social relations of power and rule'

Ipshita Basu - Westminster University

Joe Devine - Bath University

One of the main contributions of anthropological approaches to examining the state, has been to reconceptualise the boundaries between state and civil society so that we see the state from within other institutional forms through which social relations are lived (family, community, civil society, economy) and not simply as a block that sits at the apex of society. Bringing this perspective to the formation of the digitalising state, means dis-aggregating and de-emphasising the centrality of mandated digital governmental practices, while seeing how they are dispersed through range of state and non-state institutions, communities, and individuals. This paper focuses on the digitalisation of social protection and emergency relief in Bangladesh during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, to show how centrally mandated digital processes were ultimately delivered through an intermediating society, where what determined access to services was not *how digitally literate or not* a member of a marginalised group was, but rather *who they were politically connected to*. Drawing on ethnographic research in two districts in Bangladesh, with evidence of systemic exclusion of certain communities from digitally delivered social protection and relief services, we explain how technocratic solutions are scripted through political management, which goes right down to the grassroots of local party politics. In this context, while statist rhetoric may imagine the 'digital state' as centralising and seamless, in reality it is embedded in messy but rather systematically managed social relations which determine the working of power and rule.

'Sweet talking with the State: Land brokers strategies in the digitalising Nairobi Metropolitan Region'

Dennis Muthama – British Institute in Eastern Africa, Kenya

Fenna Hoefsloot – University College London, UK

In Kenya's land sector, land brokers feature as key-figures bridging the gap between the state and citizens. By mobilising their knowledge of bureaucratic processes and establishing and maintaining relationships, land brokers are able to connect the disparate worlds of, usually



marginalised, citizens and bureaucratic government. However, while brokers are key in many paper-based bureaucracies, as people-to-land relationships are increasingly registered digitally, the highly institutionalised yet not necessarily formal rules of the land administration system in which they operate change and roles are re-written.

Like other emergent capitalist states, Kenya is undergoing a series of governmental and digital restructurings since the 2010s. These restructuring efforts have largely been driven by a double commitment to improving governance and control over resources and introducing more transparency and efficiency in service provision. Specifically, Kenya's land sector has gone through substantial legislative and administrative reforms over the past decades, of which the most recent is the movement towards the use of digital technology for land governance. Digital information infrastructures are increasingly used by states to provide, expand, and reform government services and to organise and re-structure existing and new relationships between the state, stakeholders, and citizens. The digitalising state (Datta, 2023) - as a restructuring of networks, information flows, and territories - implies the use of digital interfaces for facilitating the interaction between the state and residents, signalling a potential shift in the position of brokers in this system.

Drawing on interviews with land brokers and key-actors in land administration and ethnographic observations in Kajiado county, we explore how the figure of the land broker – the middleman between the citizens and the state in Kenya's land sector – adapts and cements their position within the digitalising state, despite its efforts to automatise their work and remove them from the network of state and non-state actors in land administration.

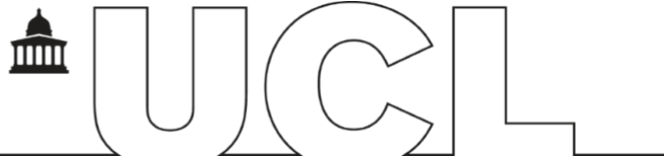
PAPER SESSION 3:

'Genealogies of the digitalising state'

'Law as a weapon: governing Maasai land in a digitalising state'

Catherine Gateri, Dennis Muthama and Melissa Wangui - British Institute in Eastern Africa, Kenya

Recent developments in land administration information systems (LIS) have revolutionised the way land is governed and developed in Kenya. Using historical analysis, archival research, fieldwork, and oral narratives this paper examines how the use of land law as a land governance



and dispossession tool has evolved over time to present day digital land administration systems.

We use the “lawfare” lens to argue that legal mechanisms have been used as weapons of governmentality to the detriment of the governed communities. Kenya’s land law history traces back to late 19th century when colonialists’ economic considerations played a major role in the design of the resulting land administration systems. This begun with the Berlin Conference of 1885 in the 'scramble for Africa', to the formation of the East Africa Protectorate and finally, the declaration of Kenya as a British Colony in 1920. Just preceding the official 'colonisation' many Indian Laws were borrowed such as: The India Land Acquisition Act of 1894. The Crown Lands Ordinance and the Land Registration ordinance became the initial stamps of land dispossession for the native African. This came in the form of 999-year leases to European settlers and alienating Africans from their own land. When Kenya gained independence, the post-independence government entrenched colonial era land administration laws. The Registered Land Act of 1963, for instance, was meant to address land problems in the former native reserves. However, it embodied more of the English Law of individualisation, making the process of registering communal lands more difficult. In this contemporary period the 2010 constitution and subsequent laws have changed how land is regulated but the main design imperative to support a functioning land market remained. Important to this paper is that before the 2010 Constitution, and the subsequent Land Registration Act of 2012, all land laws and policies in Kenya were operationalised based on a British colonial template that did not envisage a digital system. Explicit land digitalisation systems have been implemented post the 2010 constitution and were supposed to ensure the efficient operationalisation of the existing land laws. Particularly, the Ardhisasa platform which is the National Land Administration provides digital services in land registration, survey and mapping, valuation, as well as adjudication and settlement. Our review shows how the creation of a vibrant land market is the common thrust of land laws and policies from the colonial period to the current push towards modern LIS. This paper concludes that while the modern LIS and its various online platforms at the two levels of governance (national and county) are setting the stage for a digitalising state, their implications for the local community are significant and should be analysed and documented for the purpose of informing policy.

‘Framing the digital state: A genealogy of the information and communication laws in India’

Neha Gupta and Abdul Shaban – Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

This paper constructs a genealogy of the Indian State's informational practices. It delves into the information and communication laws enacted in the country over the decades to understand the



evolution of informational statecraft. Through a discursive analysis of these laws, this paper demonstrates the central role that the legal cultures of information have played in moulding the Indian state and its sovereign power over time. Beginning with the analysis of the Indian Electronic Telegraph Acts of the late nineteenth century that expanded the colonial state's territorial control by increasing its information reach, this paper will demonstrate the specific interaction of information, infrastructures, territoriality, and governmentality that are generated in specific moments and spaces. For instance, the Electronic Telegraph Act of 1860 that followed in the wake of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 transferred the exclusive rights to establish telegraph lines hitherto enjoyed by the East India Company to the Governor-General, marking the shift in the regime. It also increased the penalties for intruding into the signal room and cutting lines, a common strategy used by the mutineers. Its successor, the Telegraph Act of 1885, amended the definition of the telegraph to include "appliances and apparatus for transmitting or making telegraphic, telephonic or other communications by means of electricity, galvanism or magnetism" to reflect technological advancements in Britain and gave the government the right to intercept messages and take possession of licensed telegrams in the national interest or for public safety. The project of colonial governmentality depended on these informational regimes that legitimised the sweeping and relentless processes of information gathering, storing, and distribution. The post-colonial Indian state's relationship with information was highly proprietary. In the years immediately following independence, the state integrated these informational infrastructures into its nationalist-socialist agendas. In this period, broadcasting in India was the state's domain. The national broadcasters All India Radio and then later Doordarshan disseminated centrally controlled information to the citizenry. The Indian Space Program was also nationalized. The state's ability to legitimize itself lay in its capacity to arbitrate the flow of information. More recently, the informational regime is being constructed as a project of digital sovereignty through invoking the spectre of data colonialism. The state asserts itself through laying sovereign claims to information about its citizens that should not flow out of its territorial boundaries. The Data Protection Bill, 2023, for instance, seeks to regulate the processing of "Indian" data outside its borders "if it is for offering goods or services in India". Through controlling data flows, the state seeks to expand its jurisdictional boundaries and align the same to its physical boundary. These claims gesture towards the appropriation of individual information as collective property over which the state can then juridicate. To conclude, the paper offers insights into how informational regimes and state practices are co-constitutive through developing a genealogical account of how information as a category configures particular notions of statehood and is then implicated into its social, material, and ideological domains.

'Disruption from below: Municipalities are in the room'

Juan Demerutis and Jesús Flores – University of Guadalajara, Mexico



This paper discusses how municipalities in Mexico plan and manage their territory from below, where, through decentralisation, a municipality uses its economic conditions as support, empowering itself with its own information and technological systems.

After Mexico's independence, the victorious regional leaders established a federal republic comprised of free and sovereign states. The new political system comprised three levels of government in the country - federal, state, and municipal -, each with powers and responsibilities clearly outlined in the Constitution. Nonetheless, over the past decades, the distribution of power set out by the federal pact has been gradually changing. After the Mexican Revolution, the nation retained ownership of land, which was mainly exerted by the promulgation of ejido lands, originally granted to peasants in rural Mexico. With the process of urbanisation and the concentration of economic and political power in some of the country's largest cities (some of them already metropolises), land administration has been decentralised via the delegation of responsibilities to municipalities. However, this devolution of responsibilities has not been accompanied by appropriate funding to enable the municipalities to effectively implement land policies and procedures.

A major change in land administration took place in 1983, when the Constitution assigned responsibility to the municipality to control and supervise land use (Art. 115). This attribution is elaborated in general laws, which distribute competencies among the three levels of government. Altogether, federal laws and derived state laws contain provisions that have an impact on the municipalities. Concurrently, municipal regulations regulate specific aspects and allow municipalities to exert their autonomy.

To facilitate territorial administration and planning, the use of digital information platforms for decision-making has been promoted in recent years. In Mexico, the main supplier is the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, a body charged with strengthening and centralising the National Information System, which used to be a unique source of cartography and information in the country. However, the democratisation of technology has allowed local governments to generate their own platforms, which has resulted in the existence of several sources of information.

The shortcomings of some municipalities and a certain reluctance to have information to manage urban development have led them to disregard other sources (federal and state sources) to fulfil their legal obligations in terms of planning and land management. This stance, together with the possibility of disincorporation of socially owned land (ejidos) since the 1990s, has generated a chaotic urban scenario, particularly in the metropolitan peripheries. To keep abreast of these development processes, municipalities, especially the smaller in size, require resources that they lack. Meanwhile, the governments of the most populated municipalities – those in medium and



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large cities - are becoming increasingly relevant in political and economic spheres, even to the point of equating the state government in power.

Big data from the South(s): Beyond data universalism

Stefania Milan – University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

TBD

PAPER SESSION 4:

‘Global challenges and the digitalising state’

‘Digitalizing sewage: the politics of producing, sharing, and operationalizing data from wastewater-based surveillance in South Asian cities’

Josie Wittmer - University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Carolyn Prouse - Queen’s University, Canada

Mohammed Rafi Arefin - University of British Columbia, Canada

Expanded during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Wastewater-Based Surveillance (WBS) is now heralded by scientists and policy makers alike as the future of governing urban health and disease. Currently deployed in over 72 countries, WBS involves sampling urban sewage to detect biomarkers for disease and claims to offer non-invasive, real-time, and transparent or ‘unbiased’ modes of collecting, analyzing, and sharing population health data. The emergence of WBS in public health governance reflects larger neoliberal governance trends in the era of ‘smart cities,’ whereby digitalizing states increasingly rely on producing big data to surveil various aspects of everyday life. We contribute a feminist approach to an urban political ecology of data in understanding the socioecological and policy implications of WBS and the data it produces in governing the nexus of waste, health, and citizenship. With a focus emanating from three South Asian cities, our paper investigates the pathways through which WBS data is produced, made known, and operationalized in ‘evidence-based’ decision-making in increasingly digitalised states.

We argue that in South Asia, wastewater surveillance data is actively produced through fragile but power-laden networks of transnational and local knowledge, funding, and practices. Using mixed qualitative methods, we found these networks produced artifacts like dashboards to



communicate data to the public in ways that enabled claims to objectivity, ethics, and transparency. Interrogating these representations, we demonstrate how these artifacts open up messy spaces of translation that trouble linear notions of objective data informing accountable, transparent, and evidence-based decision-making for diverse urban actors. By thinking through the production of precarious biosurveillance infrastructures, we respond to calls for more robust ethical and legal frameworks in the production, translation, and sharing of WBS data and suggest that the fragility of WBS infrastructures has important implications for the long-term trajectories of urban public health governance in digitalising states.

'IPv6 and Yeti DNS Project, the digital earthquake of the domain name revolution'

Jinghan Li – University College London

The Internet is not merely a technological artefact, but a complex network of systems, protocols, standards, hardware, and organizations. At the core of this network is the naming system, which is a critical “key” for devices to access the global network and establish their presence and identity. The naming system uses globally unique and universally accepted sets of identifiers, with the Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4) using 32 bits, and IPv6 using 128 bits to prevent domain names from running out due to the growth of smart devices. The domain name system, along with other Internet protocols, exhibits the key characteristics of infrastructure, including its ubiquitous scope and rootedness in existing technological structures and social environments. Despite their consequential often-invisible and transparent nature, these protocols play a pivotal role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of cyberspace, as well as that of the physical world. This paper will discuss the role that China has attempted to play as an active facilitator in the transition from IPv4 to IPv6, what impact this role has had on China's Internet infrastructure, and the current dilemma of IPv6's development in China and the reasons for it. It also attempts to examine the path and outcomes of China's digital state governance through the lens of the renewal of the Internet Domain Name System (DNS), especially its role in China's hosting of large-scale international events such as the Winter Olympics.

'Lockdown lessons: Analysing food relief efforts in an Indian megacity'

Eesha Kunduri – University of Minnesota, USA

Shahana Sheikh - Yale University, USA

Shamindra Nath RoY - Centre for Policy Research, India



This paper analyses questions at the intersection of governance and service delivery in an Indian megacity, through an appraisal of food relief efforts during COVID-19 lockdown in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. In this paper, we ask: How did India's capital city with a population of more than 20 million widen its food security net amidst one of the most stringent lockdowns in the world? What lessons can be gathered from this experience? A large-scale approach was carried out by the Delhi government to universalise access to food during a time of unprecedented crisis. The organization of large-scale emergency relief-efforts was not easy, given the diverse nature of exclusions faced by urban migrants. These exclusions are tied to non-portable registration, and complicated identity-based criteria to access basic social welfare entitlements. We analyse publicly available data on the Delhi government's food relief efforts, which consisted of cooked food relief and provision of foodgrains (via e-coupons), alongside field reports from various informal settlements. The analysis, spread over four phases of lockdown and two phases of 'unlock' (or reopening), demonstrates high demand for service delivery in even the richest districts, pointing to a highly variegated landscape of urban inequality in Delhi. We also find a sharp decline in cooked food distribution during the 'unlock' phase, with implications for informal workers without formal entitlements, who could not return to their jobs immediately and were relying on these cooked meals for at least one meal a day. Simultaneously, outreach efforts to provide e-coupons for foodgrains by the government ran into severe bottlenecks, owing to issues of governance capacity and technocratic distribution architecture for such entitlements. We argue that the Delhi government's food relief efforts during and after the pandemic-induced lockdown offer us valuable lessons for the universalisation and integration of the structures of social protection (including but not limited to food security), essential to regain the trust of migrants and the urban poor in the city's governance systems. We further ask: What is at stake for state theory and practice, especially pertaining to questions of data and governance? What are the broader implications of digitalization for service delivery and citizen welfare?

'Performing digitalisation, ensuring survival: What the story of Pune 'Smart' City tells us'

Arushi Sharan – Oxford University, UK

The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) is an urban development programme, launched by the Government of India in 2015. Under this programme, India's selected 'smart cities' have introduced 'smart elements' such as WiFi points, CCTV cameras, and environmental sensors. Further, each city has set up an Integrated Command and Control Centre which is supposed to be a nodal point for the convergence and synthesis of data being captured by 'smart elements', signalling a systemic introduction of digitalisation in urban governance and development processes.

However, based on insights generated inductively from empirical data collected through fieldwork, particularly in Pune 'smart' city, I argue that 'digitalisation' and its associated 'smartness' are performative. Their function is to give an impression via performance that the city is a 'global city' that is at par with the latest 'innovations' happening elsewhere in the world, and a suitable site for investment of capital. Beneath that performance, the actual uptake of any



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'smart' ventures remains minimal, despite the fact that Pune is the birthplace of IT giant Infosys, home to the offices of several multinational IT companies, and despite the implementation of SCM projects largely in areas proximate to this IT industry.

I draw from Cerny's (1997) idea that states in the era of globalisation have been transformed into 'competition states' that have to continually adapt and respond to the pressures brought on by globalising forces and international market actors. Building on this, I further argue that the performance of digitalisation is primarily put on by the state's national scale, which has to face the heat of this competition more intensely, competing with other nation-states to attract global capital as opposed to the city-scale of the state, which has other local alliances and interests that compete for its attention. Thus, for the national state, the performance of digitalisation becomes a strategy for survival.