
City 2.0: Forging a new urban outlook?

June 2012

[Alastair Donald](#) , [Mindy Gofton](#) , [Martin Bryant](#) and [Lisa Raynes](#) introduced a discussion on the lure of the social city and what role it can play in regenerating city space.



‘Open source cities’; ‘smart cities’; ‘intelligent cities’. The choice of prefix may change, but enthusiasts seem increasingly convinced that digital technologies are transforming not only the nature of communication, but also the way we design, build, use, and interact within cities. On awarding the TED 2012 prize to [The City 2.0](#) , the organisers disputed the idea that this city of the future was a ‘sterile utopian dream’. Rather, they argued, we are seeing a real-world upgrade, tapping into humanity’s collective wisdom to create places of ‘beauty, wonder, excitement, inclusion, diversity, life.’



There are many other claims made for new technologies. Hewlett Packard’s version of City 2.0 asserts that the Information Age is reinventing the city for scalability and sustainability. IBM

argue that intelligent technologies are turning neighbourhoods into 'manageable ecosystems'. According to engineers Arup, new malleable systems increase citizen awareness of the relationships between activities, neighbourhoods, and wider urban systems. Unlike the inflexible, monolithic 20th century city, the Smart City, they say, is a place that citizens collectively modify.



New technologies are also often credited too with reviving sociability and civic engagement. Social media banish loneliness while digital platforms help create 'networked publics' organised around collective goals or issues, the transparency of the data-commons helping reform civic society. Some might question whether such innovations are genuinely able to transform relations between city institutions and the public, turning them from exercises in concealment and spin to thriving interactions based on accountability, dialogue and participation. Others insist, however, that this is not merely top-down or bottom-up, but rather a new, more democratic form of peer to peer interaction.



So where do we stand on the claims for the City 2.0? Digital technologies certainly offer new opportunities to interact, but to what extent is this fostering a revival of sociability and engagement? Might the quest for evermore data and transparency be more enslaving than

enlightening, and do social media twitch-hunts and twitterstorms suggest that 'open source' cities are perhaps not so open after all? Cities have often been celebrated for their anonymity and the ability to bring together strangers. Do social media merely relocate these opportunities to cyberspace - or is crowdsourcing a less than adequate replacement for crowds? For all the claims that an online culture can help promote new forms of civic engagement with the city and the formation of new collectives, is there still something missing from the City 2.0?

Listen again (variable quality)...

Speaker intros and full discussion in one go - click on the Play button: {mp3}social-city-of-tomorrow{/mp3}

Some background readings

[Road Map for the Digital City](#) , New York City website

[Cisco's Big Bet on New Songdo: Creating Cities From Scratch](#) , by Greg Lindsay, Fast Company, 1 February 2010

[What role did social media play in the Manchester riot?](#) , posted by Richard Frost, The E Word 10 August 2011

[Clarkson's just Clarkson – would you have cared, pre-YouTube and Twitter?](#) by Padraig Reidy, Guardian CiF, 1 December 2011

[What the 2012 TED Prize Means for 'The City 2.0'](#) , by Nate Berg, The Atlantic Cities, 06 Dec 2011

[Open Source Urbanism | Open Source City](#) , by Domenico Di Siena, Urbanohumano 3 February 2012

[Social Cities of Tomorrow, Background to international conference & workshop in Amsterdam](#) , February 2012

[Mappiness, the happiness application](#) , London School of Economics / ESRC project

[The City 2.0, Recipient of the 2012 TED Prize, Unveils Its World Changing Wish](#) , gnom newsire service 29 Feb 2012

[How the 2012 TED Prize, The City 2.0, Aims to Crowdfund the Future](#) , by Anthony Flint, the Atlantic Cities 1 March 2012

[I am the crucible of the future](#) , The City 2.0 Beta

[Help me create a manifesto for a model mayor](#) , by Dave Hill, Guardian CiF 4 March 2012

[Conservation: reflecting a fear of the future?](#) by Mark Iddon, Manchester Salon First Tuesday, June 2012

[Street performers told to cough up or shut up](#) , Larry Neild, Liverpool Confidential 6 June 2012

[Smart Cities](#) , Raconteur 7 June 2012

[Public spaces in Britain's cities fall into private hands](#) , by Jeevan Vasagar, Guardian 11 June 2012



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