Parallel session 3C-1.3
Smart Cities
Tuesday 12 November, 16.00 – 17.30
26 Bedford Way, Room 113

Chair: **Prof. Ayona Datta**, Professor of Human Geography, UCL
Discussant: **Adam Greenfield**, writer and urbanist

The Making of Singapore in Amaravati: The geographies of policy mobility, spatial politics, and ground realities of developing the smart capital
Dr Diganta Das, Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

This paper attempts to contribute towards the theorisation of urban policy mobility and South-South circulation of knowledge based on an empirical study of India's first smart capital. Based on intensive fieldwork in Amaravati and Singapore, and grounding around the studies that reflect emulation of planning culture, the role of the state, spatial politics and questions of land, this paper explores the methodological and everyday challenges of Singapore's modelling in Amaravati.

India under neoliberal logics is increasingly becoming entrepreneurial and investing heavily on city-centric ideas – branding them as smart, high-tech and globally connected. Best practices from around the world are being consulted and emulated to make smart and global cities. India aspires to create 100 smart cities by involving private actors, global consultants and incorporating smart practices from around the world. Amaravati, the new capital of Andhra Pradesh state, has been conceived as the first smart capital of India by the chief minister of the state. Just before the 2014 state election, political leaders sold the dream of Amaravati as the smart capital and won the election to rule the state for five years. Later, the chief minister and his bureaucratic elites travelled to Singapore – a popular urban model for emulation in India. With deep expertise in urban planning and management, Singapore agencies were selected to develop the master plan of Amaravati – the new Singapore in India. Political leaders, bureaucratic elites and planners began travelling from both sides to make the smart capital, and investments began flowing for capital development. However, the farmers' protests against the appropriation of land, economic realities of the state, and finally, the change in the state's political leadership in 2019, temporarily grounded the capital development program.

When Small goes Smart: Postcolonial urban futures in the Global South
Dr Srilata Sircar, Research Fellow, Department of Geography, UCL
Paper co-authored by Prof Ayona Datta, and the ESRC-ICSSR team

The coming of a 'digital turn' in the Indian urban age has presented new challenges in planning for sustainable futures (Datta 2018). In India, we argue that solutions to this

challenge present three specific features – speed, scale and size. In two recent interlinked programmes of Digital India and 100 Smart Cities, the rhetoric of 'fast urbanism' (Datta and Shaban 2017) seeks to use speed as a practice of managing large-scale urbanisation in the future. While 100 smart cities of the future are planned at a national scale of mega-urbanisation (Lauermann 2018), there is a conscious shift of focus in these agendas to urbanise smaller-sized regional cities through digitally enhanced planning and governance. This paper will examine how speed, scale and size as practices of 'futuring' enable the extrapolation of 'present crises' to imagine, anticipate, visualise and 'own the future' (Urry 2016) in the Global South. In India, small cities present a 'double gap' in our knowledge of postcolonial urban futures since a) there is uncertainty around the role that they will play in delivering the challenges of India's urban 'crises' framed through rapid urbanisation, migration and infrastructural collapse; and b) there is uncertainty around the role of highly centralised smart city technologies and infrastructures of governance retrofitted in existing small cities, given their continued challenges of data scarcity and broken, incomplete or improvised infrastructures. This paper will argue that scholarship on postcolonial urbanism needs to articulate a new theory of 'smallness' that goes beyond the notions of 'ordinary cities' (Robinson 2002) and 'planetary urbanisation' (Brenner 2014) to include a rethinking of what constitutes speed, scale and size in a digital urban age.

Remaking Anaklia: trial, error and reproduction in the making of a logistical frontier
Evelina Gambino, PhD candidate, Department of Geography, UCL
Paper co-authored with Tekla Aslanishvili, Independent artist and filmmaker

The coastal village of Anaklia on the Black Sea has, in the past decade, been at the centre of different waves of investment and speculation in an attempt to turn it into a logistics hub. Envisaging a future of global connections and international trade, Anaklia was planned to host a deep-sea port, a free industrial zone and a privately owned smart city. While its future is uncertain, the multiple attempts and infrastructural efforts that have invested its shores have changed the topography of the place, leaving longstanding marks not only on its landscape, but also on the socio-economic relations amongst those who inhabit it. In our presentation, we propose to reflect on these changes, exposing the different urban, architectural and economic ideologies converging in the planning of Anaklia and the processes of trial and error sparked by its materialisation. Examining the only two buildings erected on the territory of the future smart city, we discuss the intersections between 'test-bed urbanism' (Halpern et al 2013) – the open-ended and speculative planning paradigm framing the smart city – and the performance of geopolitical affirmation and spectacular futurity channelled through the buildings' architecture. The unfinished space of Anaklia, despite not yet being productive, is brought to life through a variety of reproductive practices: the lives of those who live in the surroundings of the planned hub have been reframed by the promise of grandiose development, and in this extended waiting, the adjustments, temporal dispositions and small-scale speculations performed by local inhabitants have come to compose the life of the smart 'city yet to come' (Simone 2004). Our presentation will reflect our collaborative research work in Anaklia and other logistical spaces across Georgia, and will include extracts from Tekla Aslanishvili's ongoing documentary 'Algorithmic Island', as well as a short written presentation.

Understanding participatory platforms through urban assemblages
Yu-Shan Tseng, PhD candidate, Durham University

Two digital platforms, Decide Madrid and vTaiwan-Pol.is, are used by Madrid City Council and the Taiwanese government respectively for public participation and are disseminated to more than 70 governmental institutions around the world, including Porte Alegre. In answering the recent call for 'platform urbanism' (Rodgers & Moore, 2018), this paper draws on the notion of urban assemblages (McFarlane 2011b; McFarlane 2011a) to conceptualise and compare their spatial-materiality on two levels: 1) by highlighting particular translocal trajectories; and 2) by foregrounding the centralised spatiality – which is constituted by the contingent and material interactions between participants, data-points and algorithms.

Firstly, translocal trajectories grow through a combination of the political commitments of the two 'reformed' governmental institutions and a wider 'civic hacking' culture. The details of each translation – including what is made through political commitments and how the platform is designed – matter, as they suggest how participatory platforms might function and empower citizens differently. Secondly, I argue that the participatory platforms are constituted by, and operate through, the centralised spatiality, which is constituted by 'acts of assembling' (McFarlane 2011c, p.651) – the material interaction between algorithms, data-points and participants. The centralised spatiality prioritises issued-based propositions (Latour 2007) of the urban. These propositions are political as they describe which urban lives (from urban animals to Uber-drivers) draw the concerns of participants and politicians. At the same time, it excludes other urban lives within the thousands of user-generated proposals / comments from being seen.