

# Smart cities: utopia or dystopia?

SPEAKING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_4048S\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English

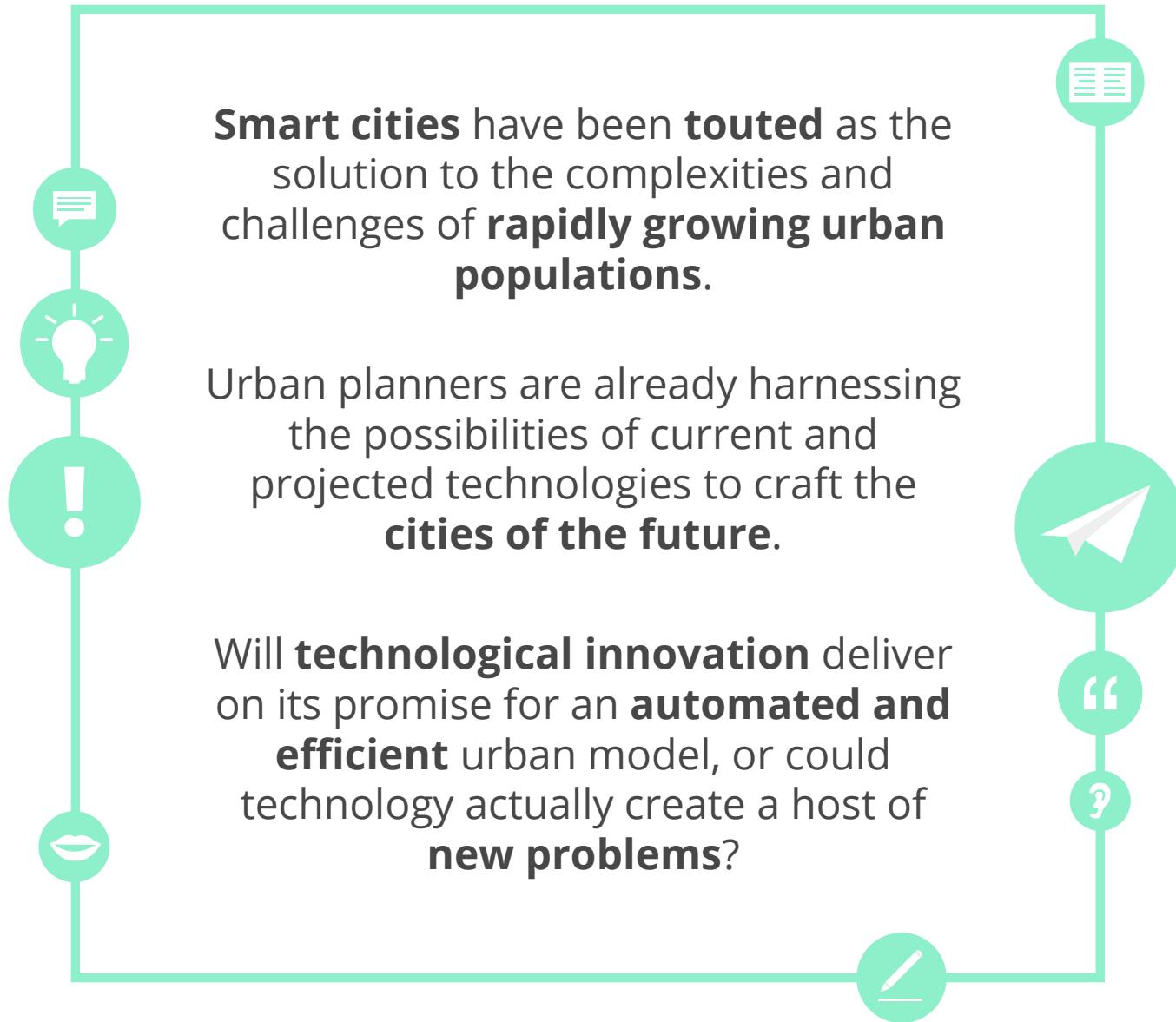




## Goals

- Can read, listen to and understand a complex text about smart cities.
- Can discuss and evaluate the potential pros and cons of a smart city and speculate as to how it would affect its inhabitants.







## Warm-up

**What would a city of the future look like?**





## Discussion

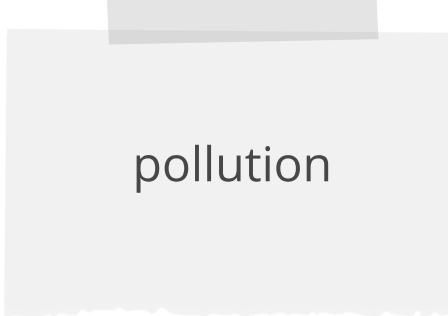
**Discuss the challenges facing cities in the coming decades.  
What do you think are the most pressing issues, and why?**



population  
growth



public health



pollution



affordable  
housing



## Smart cities: utopia or dystopia?



Technological innovation has given birth to the concept of smart cities. These are urban areas that utilise data to ensure **municipal** resources are used as efficiently as possible. As human populations increasingly drift towards urban life, the pressures on cities to adapt to these changing demographics become increasingly pressing.



## Smart cities: utopia or dystopia?

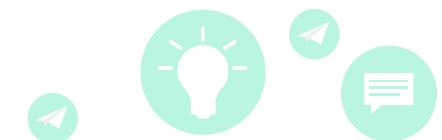
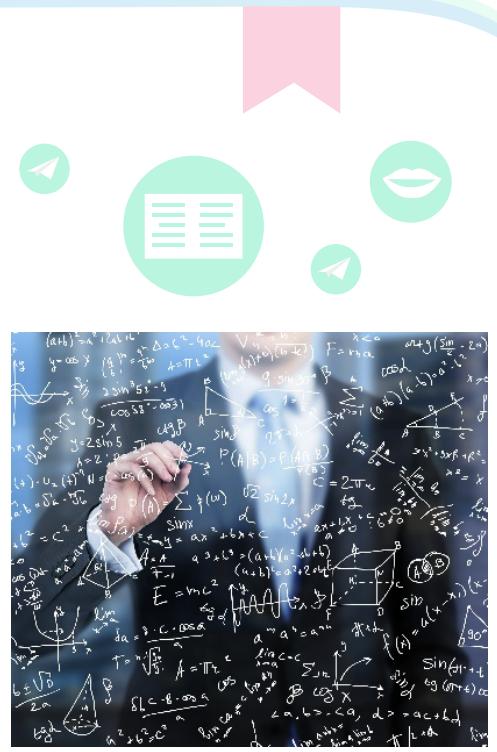


By 2050, it is predicted that 70% of the Earth's population will be city-dwellers - to achieve a **sustainable trajectory** of growth, **municipal** governments are looking to technology and data to provide the answers. Increased levels of pollution, access to infrastructure, congestion and affordable rent are issues that every city will be forced to resolve in the wake of these changing demographics.



## Smart cities: utopia or dystopia?

Smart cities of the future will attempt to use the data gathered by technology to maximise efficiency in an aim to improve the quality of life of its residents. A city might install **sensors** to collect information on citizen's energy use across an urban **grid**. Analysing the data would allow experts (or **algorithms**) to **optimise** the distribution and flow of energy across the network. As data is easily shared, different departments would be able to draw upon and share the same information, resulting in a more connected urban environment.





## New words

**municipal**

Alfred was in charge of **municipal** waste collection.

**trajectory**

The economic **trajectory** for the next quarter looks positive.

**sensors**

These **sensors** can detect the slightest movement in the room.

**optimise**

I want to **optimise** opportunities in life for all of the students in this class.



## New words

### algorithm

The programmer spotted the problem with the **algorithm**.

### grid

I'm going to spend next month off the **grid**.

### citizency

It is essential for a healthy democracy to have an informed and educated **citizency**.

### sustainable

I really don't think that amount of exercise is **sustainable**!



## What were these phrases referring to in the article?

Increased levels of pollution, access to infrastructure, congestion and affordable rent are issues that every city will be forced to resolve.

...urban areas that utilise data to ensure **municipal** resources are used as efficiently as possible.

A city might install **sensors** to collect information on citizen's energy use across an urban **grid**.

Smart cities of the future will attempt to use the data gathered by technology to maximise efficiency...

Analysing the data would allow experts (or **algorithms**) to **optimise** the distribution and flow of energy across the network.

... to achieve a **sustainable trajectory** of growth, **municipal** governments are looking to technology and data to provide the answers.



## Explain

**Explain how technological innovation has shaped cities already, transforming them from how they operated a decade ago.**

transport

connectivity

sustainability

statistics

utopia

dystopia



A **utopia** is an ideal of a perfect place or situation, especially in a social, political or moral context.

By contrast, a **dystopia** is a hypothetical environment which is dominated by misery, oppression and control, where humans live in anxiety and fear.



## Dystopia?

**Write about some of the potential downsides for citizens living in a smart city.**

**Respond to the statements below and discuss your answers.**

There's no escape from the hum of technology!

The potential consequences of a system crash or shutdown...

Misuse of personal data by officials.

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## Get ready to listen



The next few slides will focus on  
training your listening comprehension



## Listen and fill the gaps

**Listen along to the teacher on the potential pitfalls and risks of poorly implemented smart cities. Fill in the gaps with the provided vocabulary.**

Despite the utopian \_\_\_\_\_ that surrounds the idea of smart cities there are a host of potential complications and downsides. The data necessary to fuel this highly connected \_\_\_\_\_ comes at the cost of the privacy of its \_\_\_\_\_.

The cameras and sensors that provide information to law-enforcement agencies and help our cities run more \_\_\_\_\_ are also the source of \_\_\_\_\_ in the smart city debate.

High-resolution cameras and facial recognition technology seem to promise the \_\_\_\_\_ future predicted by George Orwell in his novel 1984.

The risks to \_\_\_\_\_, privacy and human rights are undeniable

infrastructure

civil rights

efficiently

citizenry

controversy

optimism

dystopian



## New words

**visionaries**

Silicon Valley is full of would-be **visionaries**!

**promulgate**

Once again the politicians **promulgate** the same tired arguments.

**baulk**

Why do you always **baulk** at the idea of going dancing?

**interconnectivity**

Modern gadgets need **interconnectivity** to thrive in today's market.



## Discuss

Try to rephrase these sentences from the text in your own words.



The data necessary to fuel this highly connected infrastructure comes at the cost of the privacy of the citizenry.

...optimise the distribution and flow of energy across the network.

High resolution cameras and facial recognition technology seem to promise the dystopian future...

...urban areas that utilise data to ensure municipal resources are used as efficiently as possible.

...there is a real fear that human privacy, dignity and consciousness become afterthoughts in the pursuit of innovation.



## Your opinion?

**Would you feel comfortable being tracked and surveilled as a price for living in a smart city?**

**Write a short response clearly outlining your reasons.**

A sheet of white paper with a vertical blue margin line on the left side. There are ten horizontal grey lines for writing, each preceded by a small grey circular bullet point.





## Implications

**Will local diversity be lost as a result of smart cities?  
Could all cities end up the same in globally interconnected  
world?**

- What else could be lost in the pursuit of efficiency?





## Privatised future

Those who cannot keep up with the pace of technological change will be left behind, and locked out of the potential returns smart cities will provide.

Discuss your ideas regarding the above statement.

- Will those without the latest gadgets be left behind?
- Could it increase inequality in cities?





## Your opinion

What data might be useful for the optimal running of a smart city?



**Talk about the potential pitfalls of a municipality's over-reliance on technology. Use the pictures as stimulus.**





## Concerned citizenry

You are the mayor of Bristol. Your council has recently hired contractors to install thousands of cameras across the city to gather data on traffic congestion, crime, and the use of parks and other public spaces.

Community groups have expressed some concerns about the implementation of the technology.

You must make a statement to assure them you understand their concerns and will proceed accordingly.

Write a response to them and present your statement.



We have concerns about the extent of tracking and surveillance the cameras will have on the community.

This plan will create an atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia!

Facial recognition technology could be used to build profiles of members of the community...



## Advice

You are living in a smart city of the future. One of your friends is thinking of moving there, but is worried about her personal privacy and surveillance. What do you think? As a resident, give her some advice on what you think is the right decision.

A large rectangular box with a thin black border. Inside the box are six horizontal grey lines spaced evenly apart, intended for handwriting practice or writing a response.



## Reflection

How should leaders in urban municipalities proceed with the development of smart cities?

What technology should be implemented?

Are there any precautions they could take to limit the potential problems?



## Warm-down



What have you learned about smart cities after this lesson?

What are the positives and negatives of such a place?



## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





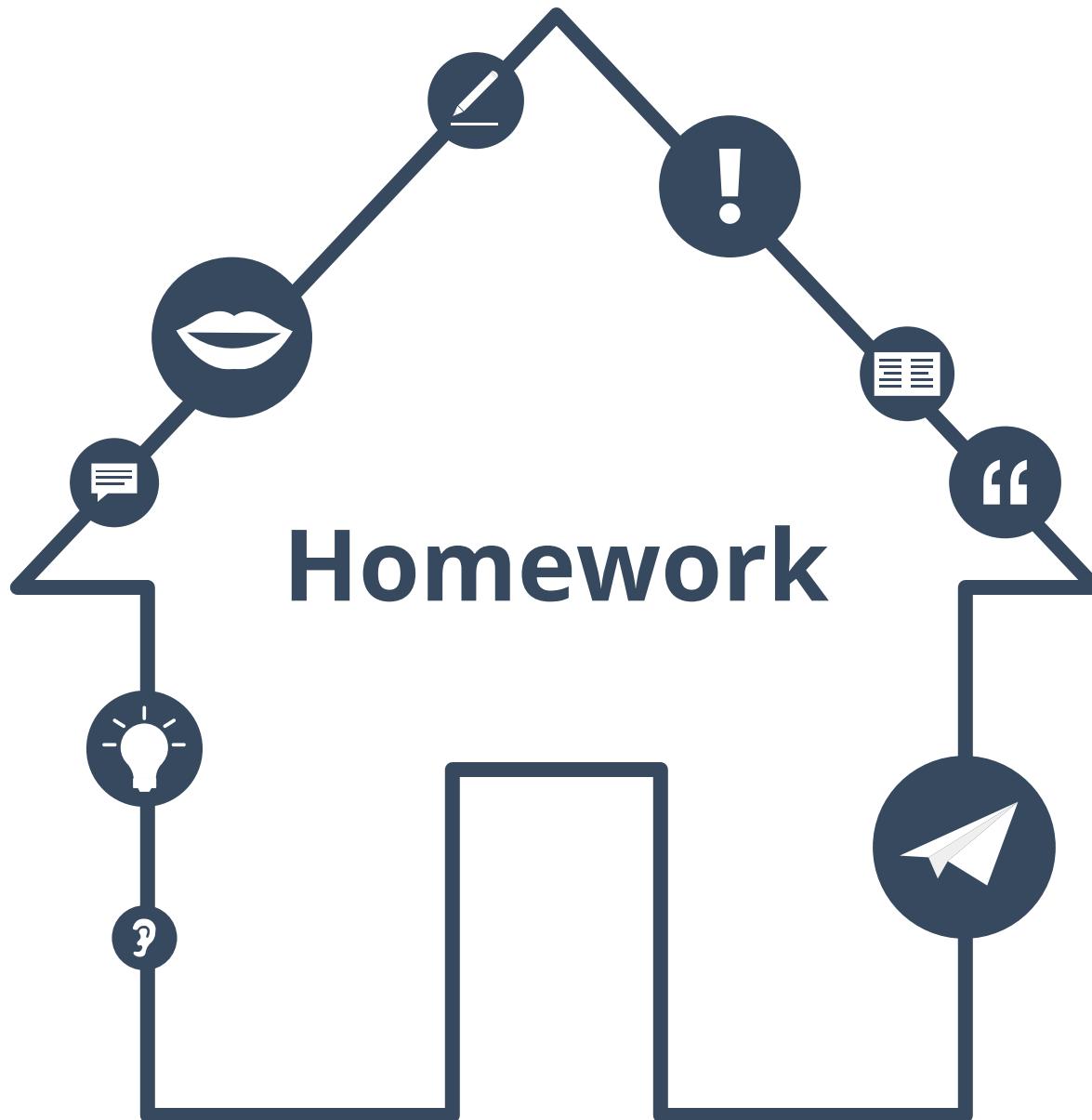
## Transcription

Despite the **utopian** optimism that surrounds the idea of smart cities, there are a host of potential complications and downsides. The data necessary to fuel this highly connected infrastructure comes at the cost of the privacy of its **citizens**. The cameras and sensors that provide information to law-enforcement agencies and help our cities run more efficiently are also the source of controversy in the smart city debate. High-resolution cameras and facial recognition technology seem to promise the dystopian future predicted by George Orwell in his novel 1984. The risks to civil rights, privacy and human rights are undeniable. While many champion the idea of greater **interconnectivity** and technological integration they **balk** at the notion of being tracked and monitored in perpetuity.



## Transcription

While the **visionaries promulgate** a digital utopia where data eliminates complication, danger and injustice there is a real fear that human privacy, dignity and consciousness – necessities for our humanity – become afterthoughts in the pursuit of technological innovation. The question the optimistic **rhetoric** fails to discuss is how this vision of modernity will affect the way people live. Citizens are shambling into a future where their every move will be tracked and monitored. What top-down technology approaches should really consider, beyond optimisation, is the experience of the citizen, the end user. Smart cities may promise an optimal and interconnected experience, but to get there the process should consider the pitfalls of surveillance and how it affects the lifeblood of the city – the wellbeing of its citizens.





## Pros and cons

**Write a short opinion piece about the pros and cons of smart cities. Aim for 200 words. If you can't think of a topic use the ones provided below.**

greater efficiency

## over-reliance on technology

surveillance

consequences if  
systems and  
networks went  
down

flattening of  
diversity

# degradation of privacy

- THE JOURNAL OF CLIMATE



## Words

## **Write a list of your favourite words from the lesson.**





## Words in action!

**Turn the words on the previous slide into sentences to practice them in use.**

Interesting words

visionaries

Silicon Valley is full of would-be visionaries!



## About this material



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