

The first goal of a smart city should be protecting the sanctity of the social contract during the shift in the mechanisms of governance. In order to maintain legitimacy and public trust, those in charge of decision must be acutely aware of the moral and philosophical ramifications posed by the imposition of new technology in the execution of government. They must heighten their consciousness of critical input from constituents. Public trust of institutions must be maintained in order to keep a vibrant and functioning economy and social sphere, both of which are vital to the very existence of cities.

Applications of smart city technologies happen quickly, and people can quickly lose connection to governmental institutions as a result. As this happens, governments must remain responsive to people's needs, desires, and expectations. Major risks come alongside the implementation of these technologies, as it is easy to take a top-down planning approach without consciousness of the negative consequences. The Constitution and state/local laws have yet to come close to directly addressing various forms of invasive programs that smart cities could implement, such as constant monitoring and algorithm-based predictive policing, facial recognition, and drone surveillance. It is necessary that we ask questions like: Who regulates and checks the security teams that use these technologies; Who ensures that there is no abuse of these systems; Who ensures that these technologies don't unfairly target certain demographics or individual members of society? This is where the maintenance of a strong social contract comes into play.

Given the level of support for smart city technologies, we should also caution ourselves from placing too much faith in the data and analytics themselves. The idea that data and analytics are objective or neutral is demonstrably false, and we must be aware that various actors can easily enforce unfair restrictions of civil liberties based on skewed data. Data is laden with assumptions about what is worth measuring and how we should best measure it, and ensuring objectivity of collection and enforcement is of the utmost importance. It is for this reason that we must move beyond the idea that security is, in and of itself, a justification for the collection and enforcement of public data.

In order to ensure that the data being collected and analyzed is productive and healthy for society and doesn't serve to erode public trust, we should differentiate between the forms of data and their methods of collection. Volunteered data is that which the public voluntarily provides in the name of productive institutions and comprehensive analysis, like that of the census. It is often inferred that this data collection is consented to preemptively through participation in society and subjection to the overarching social contract, but in the case of data collected through smart city technologies, we cannot assume that simple participation in a place warrants a voluntary submission of personal data. Observed data is that which is recorded from technologies like cellphones or cameras. There is precedent to suggest that these technologies are admissible in court cases, but circumstances change significantly if one is consistently being recorded through multiple means. This precedent could be abused in the future, should no social protections be permitted. Lastly, inferred data is that which is deduced, through various mechanisms, about individuals or groups. Various technologies already utilize inferred data, such as logistics programs and predictive policing. As collection methods and algorithms advance, we could surely see instances where crimes are predicted before they occur and people are punished for an assumption of intent, which, again, could lead to an erosion of public trust in the institutions of governance.

The consequences of the implementation of smart city technologies, while not inherently bad, can easily slip into dystopia if not consciously implemented or critiqued. Ignoring the bad in favor of utopian ideals sounds good on paper, until it quickly becomes too late. Ensuring the protection of the social contract is the only way that we can ensure that these technologies are put to work for everyone, instead of those with power.