

SMART CITIES AS HACKER CITIES. ORGANIZED URBANISM AND RESTRUCTU- RING WELFARE IN CRISIS-RIDDEN ITALY

Smart cities como hacker cities.
Urbanismo organicista y la reestructuración
del bienestar en la Italia de la crisis

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Abstract

This article is concerned with the discursive rationality of the smart city, in the context where it became a powerful narrative of urban change in crisis-ridden Italy - right after the first stage of the Euro crisis in 2011-2012. While functioning as a vague signifier that could be used to rebrand anything urban as “smart”, the smart city also portrayed cities as actors of change, as “hackers” that could leverage technological innovation to respond to social and economic crises. Starting from this observation, two arguments are explored in the paper. First, those smart city narratives follow a long tradition of biological urbanism, combining techno-utopian imageries with the more mundane question of addressing economic downturns. Secondly, that the depiction of cities as organic growth machines was, at least discursively, an experiment in rethinking the welfare state for an age of austerity.

Keywords: Smart city, social innovation, welfare, hacker city.

Resumen

Este artículo está relacionado con la racionalidad discursiva de la “ciudad inteligente”, en el contexto en el cual se convirtió en una poderosa narrativa de cambio urbano durante la crisis en Italia - justo después de la primera etapa de la crisis en Europa, en 2011-2012. Mientras que el concepto funciona como un signifiante vago que podría ser utilizado para designar cualquier cosa urbana como “inteligente”, la “smart city” también entendió a las ciudades como actores del cambio, como “hackers” que podrían aprovechar la innovación tecnológica para responder a las crisis sociales y económicas. A partir de esta observación, dos argumentos son explorados en el artículo. En primer lugar, que las narrativas de las “ciudad inteligentes” siguen una larga tradición de urbanismo biológico que combina imaginarios tecno-utópicos con la cuestión más mundana de abordar las crisis económicas. En segundo lugar, que la representación de las ciudades como máquinas de crecimiento orgánico fue, al menos discursivamente, un experimento para repensar el estado de bienestar de una era de austeridad.

Palabras clave: Ciudad inteligente, innovación social, el bienestar, ciudad hacker.

Introduction

When this article was first conceived in Italian, in the early 2013, the notion of the smart city had already started a lively debate in a series of institutional and civil society arenas, but had received little attention by Academia. As Vanolo (2014) noted, the concept was still vague, a burgeoning grey literature was being produced by bloggers and multinational corporations, and the smart city became an opaque discursive technology to push a neoliberal entrepreneurial agenda into the making of local urban policies consultancy companies. Since then, the smart city discourse has been explored as a policy mobility to attract investments and promote cities internationally (Wiig, 2015), as a technology used by tech corporations to become urban consultants (McNeill, 2015) and to establish specific ways of selling products and services to urban administrations (Söderström et al, 2014).

In this article, I analyse a specific aspect of the smart city discourse in the moment when it became a dominant narrative of urban change in crisis-ridden Italy - right after the first stage of the Euro crisis in 2011-2012. While appearing as a rather empty signifier that could be used to rebrand existing policies, as Crivello shows (2015), the smart city discourse also portrayed cities as actors of change, as “hackers” that could leverage technological innovation to respond to social and economic crises. In that, the smart city not only followed a recent trend represented by popular economists of the likes of Ed Glaeser (2011), who claims that cities can do for economic development and innovation what national governments cannot do anymore, but also a longer-standing trend of humanising cities as actors that do things, thrive, die, change, innovate. This form of “organicist urbanism” (Choay, 1965), I will show, was particularly present in smart city narratives and was functional to one of its discursive rationalities: downloading welfare responsibilities to urban administrations, making cities “responsible” for their successes or failures. In other words, the discourse of the smart city in Italy was aligned to a specific way of neoliberal restructuring through experiments in urban governance and through their focus on civil society and social innovation (Swyngedouw, 2005). In this context, cities, as intelligent players, receive the task of compensating the injustices and uncertainties of the market (Gerometta et al., 2005) as well as the financial responsibilities of public retrenchment.

In the first section of the paper, I will argue that smart city narratives follow a long standing tradition of addressing cities as biological entities, combining techno-utopian imageries with the more mundane question of addressing economic crises. While Söderström *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that this organicist utopianism functioned well as a corporate tale of good urban management performed by actors like IBM, I will focus on how national policies in Italy redefined urban governance in accordance to a technological paradigm, in which the smart city depicted yet another image of the city as an organic “growth machine” (Molotch, 1976).

In the second part of the paper, I will reflect on the affinity between smart city policies in Italy and the restructuring of the welfare state, focusing on the role that social innovation came to play in the context of austerity. Social innovation, however defined and often undefined, was deliberately associated with the smart city agenda, both in Europe and in Italy, in the circumstances of post-crisis austerity. Where the welfare state seemed to have failed, the smart city was the solution for a new welfare which attributed

cities the role of ‘hackers’: programmers that have the power to stand up to the social, environmental and political challenges of the new millennium. Nonetheless, the focus on social innovation allowed a diverse range of voices to contribute to the scripting of policies under the overarching smart city newspeak. In other words, the smart city functioned as a political technology for austerity (Pollio, 2016) but it was also an experiment in rethinking the welfare state through different rationalities and, not indifferently, through cities.

The empirical research on which this paper is based draws on the analysis of both Italian and European Union (EU) *official* documents that underpinned the smart city, and unofficial sources that were abundantly produced beside the formal documents, such as media outlets, video interviews, blogs, *Twitter* feeds, *Slideshare* presentations, tales on *Storify* and so forth. The aim of this paper is, infact, not to assess the smart city as a policy, but to explore the nature of its discursive rationalities, and their capacity of performing certain urban political economies.

1. The smart city as a growth machine.

It was 1964 when Marshall McLuhan famously wrote that ‘[w]ith instant electric technology, the globe itself can never again be more than a village, and the very nature of city as a form of major dimensions must inevitably dissolve like a fading shot in a movie’ (1994: 343). Similar arguments were reprised both by futurologists and academics who, unlike McLuhan, witnessed the diffusion of Internet technologies. In 1987 Anthony Pascal argued that the world was inclining toward uniformity and that :

the era of the computer and the communication satellite is inhospitable to the high density city. What once had to happen in the city can now take place anywhere. With the passage of time [will come] spatial regularity; the urban system converges on, even if never quite attains, complete areal uniformity. The newly emerging technologies will soon begin to provide excellent substitutes for face-to-face contact, the chief remaining *raison d’être* of the traditional city. (1987: 602, cited in Graham, 1998: 169)

It was not just the urban, but more widely the very meaningfulness of space that needed to be questioned. If Paul Virilio described the city as an obsolete ‘paradoxical agglomeration’ (1993: 10), Nicholas Negroponte, at the time Director of MIT Media Lab, went further, arguing that:

digital living will include less and less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time, and the transmission of place itself will start to become possible. If I could really look out the electronic window of my living room in Boston and see the Alps, hear the cowbells, and smell the (digital) manure in summer, in a way I am very much in Switzerland. (1995: 165).

It is a very different context the one in which IBM’s chairman, Sam Palmisano, launched the “smarter planet campaign”, during a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in November 2008 (Townsend,

2013). Information technologies applied to the urban sphere are now salvific, indispensable solutions to new urban questions. Through technological solutions, cities are the collective entities that could make us, in Glaeser's words, "richer, smarter, greener, healthier and happier" (2011:cover). This vision permeates a vast variety of official and unofficial sources that were produced in Italy from 2013, in the aftermath of the first Euro crisis (Vanolo, 2014). In that period, the country was facing a serious economic downturn, and a government made by purportedly non-political experts was elected via a bipartisan consensus with the objective of crafting an austerity policy and a solution to the structural crisis of the nation. Along with a series of traditional austerity measures, the smart city became one of the new government's dominant narratives of innovation in times of dire straits (Santangelo et al. 2013). A national smart city agenda was launched (Pollio, 2016), sustained by a common thread: the idea that cities will not only produce innovation and wealth, but also be vital in their redistribution. As Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley's apologetic *The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy* (2013) claims, cities become the actors that solve problems that national governments cannot tackle anymore.

This different understanding of the relationship between cities and information technologies (Graham 1998) underpins the launch of the smart city agenda in Italy - where cities are seen as the legitimate sites for an economic development agenda based on technological innovation. In this sense, the smart city is the last strand of what Amin & Graham (1997) termed "urban renaissance" - a rediscovery of cities as "economic motors", through a series of diverse narratives (the global city, the creative city, etc.) - both in Academia and in policy-making. In Glaeser's metaphor (2011), cities themselves are technologies of advancement, development, and even sustainability. As a New Yorker, he implicitly describes his city as an archetype of the most human of all technologies. Not dissimilarly, Jane Jacobs, a New Yorker by adoption, argued that

all developing economic life depends on city economies; it depends on them by definition because, wherever economic life is developing, the very process itself creates cities and has probably always done so [...]. [A]lso [...] all economic life depends on working links with cities. If this is correct, then it follows that no subsistence economy that uses the products and practices of economic inventiveness, no matter how residual and fragmentary, can be thought of as being truly alien to city life. Somewhere, sometime, it had links to creative cities, however briefly, however tenuously, however long ago (Jacobs, 1984: 132).

Jane Jacobs, as Choay noted (1975), continued a long-standing tradition of biological urbanism, where cities are seen as organic actors with often humanised features. This tradition, which has its roots in the imageries of the vitalist geographies of Élisée Reclus and Pierre Lavedan, is clearly alive when cities around the world are described as creative or smart. When the latter discourse appeared in Italy, Vanolo (2014) suggests, it had a discursive rationality, a purposiveness in the way in which it put cities in a state of competition (for funding, for attracting capitals, for attracting tourists, etc). Even in Academia, one of the most circulated papers on the topic (Giffinger et al. 2007) included a ranking of medium-sized European cities. Not long after, also the Italian public administration office developed its own ranking

and its own performance indicators (Pollio, 2016). Again, cities are seen as organic entities that perform and can be ranked accordingly. But it is in the specific economic context of the Euro crisis and the Italian economic downturn that the smart city narrative brought together the technological utopianism of the early cyberneticians (Townsend, 2013) and the idea that cities are actors of economic growth (or restructuring).

Literature on “smart urbanism” (Söderström, 2015) has variously pointed out how the smart city discourse was developed by multinational corporations like IBM and Cisco to create a market for their “urban” products (McNeill, 2015) and how specifically these narratives were couched on a mix of organicist and technological utopianism (Söderström et al. 2014). From a policy perspective, Wiig (2015) analyses how the techno-utopian mobilities of the smart city were harvested to promote Philadelphia in the global market rather than to deliver actual benefits to its inhabitants. In Italy, the emergence of the smart city as a national strategy of urban governance also coincided with a deep economic downturn, thus with the need to implement fiscal austerity and to restore the country’s competitiveness (Pollio, 2016). In this context, the smart city became another version of the organic growth machine described by Jane Jacobs (1984). As a key stakeholder of the Italian public administration put it,

“smart cities are the antidote to this economic crisis. [...] cities are intelligent if people can live better, first. And people can live better if cities create a good environment, if they make mobility easy, if they create cultural life accessible to all, if they help creating a network. Yet, along with an intelligent city, especially in such dire straits, we must generate development, We are talking about a city who is friendly to businesses, especially creative enterprises (La Repubblica, 2013, translation).

In the smart city discourse, cities have “personalities” - they are intelligent, friendly, creative, just like in Pierre Lavedan’s vitalist urbanism (1936) - and also do things - they create growth and address economic decline. Not much has changed since Molotch’s seminal work (1976) on the centrality of growth in the construction of technologies of land development. Land is less central in the smart city, but the political economy of its unfolding still rotates around the question of growth. The smart city thus appears as another version of urban boosterism, a powerful narrative of market rule in the competition between cities. Nonetheless, the utopian nature of its discourse shows a more complex alignment of politics in the way in which the smart city also became - at least in Italy - a synonym of inclusiveness, welfare reform and social innovation. Next section of this paper is indeed dedicated to this second aspect of smart city narratives in Italy.

New title: cities as hackers of innovation

In the previous section I have argued that the smart city represents a new stage in the understanding of the relationship between cities and information technologies, but, at the same time, it reproduces a well-established tale of the city as a machine for growth, however intended, in the market. The political implications of this conceptualization of cities have been variously addressed by the literature on neoliberal

urbanism, starting from Harvey's influential analysis (1989) of entrepreneurialism in urban governance. In the case of the smart city, Hollands (2008; 2015) traces its relationship with the profit-driven agenda that some corporations have been able to encroach into the entrepreneurial boosterism of cities. In this section of the paper, I focus on a specific aspect of this mode of governance, which is the strong link that the smart city had, in Italy, with the politics of reforming the welfare state around the concept of social innovation (Swyngedouw, 2005). This feature of the national smart city agenda, I argue, was crucial to the discursive rationality of the smart city and contributed to the scripting of its policies. In that, knowledge produced around social innovation practices was wedded to the technological utopianism that the smart city has in its DNA (Townsend, 2013).

The most explicit association between the smart city and the idea of social innovation was established by the Italian and European legislation, which was one of the main source of the smart city discourse in Italy. The tie between social innovation and the smart city is already manifest in the European Commission's strategic documents for the implementation of the "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (European Commission, 2010). In particular, in the seven sections of the program for EU2020, social innovation and, less directly, the smart city emerge in two flagship initiatives: the Innovation Union and the European Digital Agenda. These flagship Initiatives will work, from 2014, as tools for implementing the Horizon 2020 program (the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation), along with other tools of the Competitive and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP).

The most interesting aspect of the European programmatic documents is their constant reference to social innovation as the key to the inclusiveness of the frameworks outlined by the EU programs on technological innovation. The reference to the smartness of cities is less direct, but it turns out to be the dominant motif of the operational guidelines and the pilot projects financed by the CIP ICT PSP (ICT Policy Support Programme). These pilot projects are explicit experiments of smart city services, whereby information technologies are adopted in relation one or more specific urban issues.

In adopting the European guidelines, Italian laws were even clearer in associating the idea of the smart city with the idea of social innovation starting with the National Operative Programme for Research and Competitiveness 2007-2013 and the Digital Agenda for Italy (ADI), designed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Economic Development. As for the first case, it is through the Decree n . 84/2012 that the Ministry of Education has set up two areas of intervention, one consisting in the presentation of research ideas for the "Smart Cities and Communities" and the other for "Projects for social innovation". Alongside this, a second call for research (Ministerial Decree n . 391/2012) held together social innovation and smart cities from the title itself: "Smart Cities and Communities and Social Innovation". As for the ADI, it is the Decree 179/2012, significantly entitled "Further and urgent measures for the country's growth", which puts together the two concepts.

While the link between the concepts of social innovation and smart city was unequivocally expressed by official documents, it is interesting noting that a number of measures under the all-encompassing smart city narration had already been discussed by the literature on social innovation. In particular, it is in the conceptualisation of social innovation as a tool for reforming the welfare state that the smart city became, in Italy, one of the political technologies of austerity reforms (Pollio, 2016).

In this section, I explore some of the different links that - bonding social innovation and the smart

city - were performed by different actors and institutions with the aim of designing a new urban welfare. In this attempt at innovating governance, I argue, narratives of entrepreneurialism, autonomy, welfare restructuring, and social innovation in particular, were discursively functional to a displacement of “the scene of government” and designed “a renewed relation between state and civil society actors” (Lemke, 2002:50).

Social innovation, very much like the smart city, is a buzzword concept, but it has received some attention in different fields of inquiry. Over the past thirty years, it has been addressed by Science and Technology studies (see Oudshoorn & Pynch, 2008), by regional development studies (see Moulaert, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2005), by the literature on creativity and systemic design (see Manzini, 2010), but it has assumed a particular relevance for the studies on the third sector and the social economy (see Amin et al., 2003). In the UK, with the institution of NESTA and the work of Mulgan first (2006), and then with the Big Society reform programme, social innovation was a singularly powerful source of governmental and welfare change. Those experiences played a significant specimen role for Italian politicians, who explicitly declared that English welfare reforms were their sources of inspiration (either labourist or conservative). Besides, many activists, local social entrepreneurs and NGOs looked up to Britannic successful stories of community development and social ventures (see MIUR 2013). That is why; a working definition of social innovation could be taken from Mulgan et al. (2007):

The results of social innovation are all around us. Self-help health groups and self-build housing; telephone help lines and telethon fundraising; neighbourhood nurseries and neighbourhood wardens; Wikipedia and the Open University; complementary medicine, holistic health and hospices; microcredit and consumer cooperatives; charity shops and the fair trade movement; zero carbon housing schemes and community wind farms; restorative justice and community courts. All are examples of social innovation – new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve peoples’ lives (2007:7).

Social innovation is therefore about using old and new methods for mobilising the ubiquitous intelligence that exists within any society (ibidem). Following this, social innovation requires a different form of government action and, once boosted, can fulfill the gaps of the social security that are due to a retrenchment of the welfare, but also to its innate deficits (Swyngedouw, 2005).. Knowledge produced in this sphere, by academics and civil society organisations, as well as by politicians and administrators, both locally and internationally, informed the way in which the smart city agenda was translated into a set of operative policies that explicitly aimed at a re-functionalising of state action. In this trend towards the displacement of governmental responsibilities - in particular those concerning the provision of services - Lemke (2002) identifies the key governmentality of neoliberalism intended not as a political end but as a trajectory of change.

Elements of this trajectory toward a “governance-beyond-the-state” (Swyngedouw, 2005:1991) are evident in the way in which the smart city became in Italy a discourse of social innovation that shaped the will to restructure the welfare agenda. Some “ideas” of social innovation were particularly explicit:

1. intelligence is out there. Which results in an approach mediated by indirect actions, an approach well represented by the very idea of declining through a series of call for ideas (those from the Ministry of Education - where any company or private citizen could apply with the help of an accredited research institute) an industrial research strategy that would have been much quicker through a traditional, vertical allocation of research funds. A strategy of the sort shows the belief that innovative ideas exist outside traditionally given innovative milieus.
2. Linus's Law. Borrowed from computer science: given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow. In other words, transparency and openness of processes as incentives to their effectiveness. The open data, which is one of the core initiatives of the smart city agenda, shows that beyond a potential reuse of government data for entrepreneurial innovation, there was also the idea that providing citizens with an instrument of control could be a vehicle of good administration and accountability.
3. Hybrid governance. The intersection between entrepreneurs, civil society and local governments is clear in the contractual model of public-private partnership (PPP), institutionalized in the European pilot projects. This can be interpreted as a trend to privatisation but also as a way to rethink local empowerment, and displace government through technologies of governing other than the state. Living Labs are examples of PPPs in the context of smart city initiatives aimed at delivering innovative urban technologies.
4. Software Vs. Hardware. Most of the attention is focused on connectivity and urban networks rather than on hardwares - and even when projects act on the hardware, they act on the connection infrastructure (eg. the smart grids of the VII Framework Programme of the EU, or the European Internet backbone). An example at the urban scale might be the energy policy aimed at spreading district heating: although district heating projects predate the spread of the smart city debate, teleheating networks have been used as examples of 'smart' projects. The case of district heating shows this trend of acting on the network rather than on individual nodes, even when it comes to infrastructure: once reached by the infrastructure, Italian citizens must take care of the transition from combustion or electric boilers to those connecting to the underground heating network.
5. Technology as an endogenous factor of growth. Which is where keynesianism is replaced by a more schumpeterian economic theory - and not only to decrease public expenditure. While for Keynes technology was an ingredient of development, for Schumpeter it is the staple ontology of economic development (Rosenberg, 2013). The focus on innovations, the centrality of the knowledge economy and of innovative entrepreneurs are the ideas that find their declination in the Italian smart city agenda.

The list probably does not cover all the ideas of governance-beyond-the-state, but it certainly shows how the knowledge produced around social innovation, both practically and theoretically, informed certain characteristics of the smart city initiatives in Italy. In fact, the smart city, from a corporate driven

agenda for the entrepreneurial city (Wiig, 2015), became also an attempt at innovating the welfare state for an age of perennial austerity. Again, the technological utopianism of the smart city was a rich source for these narratives of innovation where cities become “hackers”, “sentient” intelligent cities (Shepard, 2011). In other words, some key concepts of social-innovation-oriented governance contributed to the idea that cities are cybernetic hybrids capable of enabling processes of change and development.

As the European Union, and Italy in particular, were facing an unprecedented economic crisis, the smart city became a discursive technology to rethink welfare models and innovate service provision. In a context where cities condensed the deeper fractures of the economic recession, the urban became the object and the subject of a new welfare based on social innovation and innovative technologies. A crisis welfare, which (inevitably?) put his confidence in the “intelligence” of urban areas, as if the cities were hackers, developers who receive the blueprint of a code, a draft to be improved. The smart city as a set of operational tools thus becomes a model for making cities responsible for environmental issues and social exclusion (Vanolo, 2014). And combining technological and environmental measures, policies for inclusion, cohesion, empowerment of the civil society, the political rationality behind the “smartness” agenda becomes a complex nexus of neoliberal experiments, progressive politics, and technological utopianism. This nexus, I have argued, is yet another form of the organicist urbanism that has long informed the way in which cities have been thought, theorised, understood as agents of economic innovation and development.

Conclusion

With its diverse narratives, the smart city became a dominant discourse of urban change in Italy in the aftermath of the economic crisis that hit Europe in the late 2000. Like elsewhere in the world, the smart city had its origins in the corporate world, with technology firms like IBM and Cisco using it as a way of re-engineering their internal structure and become urban consultants (McNeill, 2015). In other words, the smart city was initially a discursive technology developed to sell products and services to cities (Söderström et al 2014). At the same time, as Wiig (2015) shows, it is also a narrative that city themselves use to attract capitals and boost their international reputation. In Italy, the smart city appeared in the context of austerity restructuring and, with its technological utopianism, contributed to the way in which the question of urban governance in times of austerity was discussed and contested (Pollio, 2016).

In this paper, I have focused on a specific aspect of the smart city agenda in Italy, specifically on the way in which cities are understood and popularised as “hackers” of economic development and innovation. Through an analysis of its discourse, I have put forward two arguments about how the smart city shapes the way in which cities have been portrayed.

As for the first argument, I have shown how the “smartness” of cities is a stage in what Choay (1965) identified as “organicist urbanism”, an enduring utopian trope where cities are organic entities that have biological features. What is rather new in the smart city narratives, as both Townsend (2013) and Söderström et al. (2014) show, is the role of technologies, in particular information and communication technologies. The latter, Graham (1998) recollects, have often been thought in opposition to the urban, as mechanisms that overcome the geography of the city. In the smart city, instead, technologies are a specific

element through which cities are personified as organic motors. In the specific case of Italy, I have argued, a series of laws, policies, public debates and informal sources performed this understanding of cities as machines for growth in response to austerity and economic crises.

The second area to which this paper speaks to is the affinity of the smart city agenda to the political project of reforming/rethinking the welfare state, within the rationality of neoliberalism (cutting state expenditure, downloading financial responsibilities, promoting a pro-growth agenda, and so forth) but also within the politics of social innovation. Although civil-society-oriented welfare reforms have been rightly described as functional to a neoliberal mode of governance (see Rose, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2005) it would be reductive to consider the multifarious forms of knowledge and expertise produced around social innovation simply as staples of the neoliberal political project. The aim of this article has been to show how the smart city could be considered a technology of rule in the reshaping of the way in which welfare is thought of as an issue of urban governance. As a new stage of organicist utopianism, I have argued, the smart city legitimises both the idea that cities are actor of economic growth and the refocusing of the welfare as a problem/responsibility of city government.

The two aspects of the smart city discourse that this paper has brought to the fore pose some relevant challenges to critical urban theory. First, the challenge to understand how urban utopianism, which is an inherently political practice, becomes a vehicle for creating undisturbed spaces of political action, justified by the idea that a smart city is necessarily a good city. In other words, as Söderström (2015) argues, the smart city speaks to how urban governance is depoliticised through the construction of undisputable truths about city management.

Secondly, while the smart city literature has widely shown the alignments of power that variously constructed the utopian narratives of a better urban future, less has been written on the spaces and the voices that, to use a technological metaphor borrowed from Thrift's analysis of the rise of London in the nineties (1996), remain "offline". In this context, scholars from the Global South have pointed out how the grand narratives of urban smartness are countered by large displacements of poor people as well as by grassroots smart city initiatives (Watson, 2014; Odendaal & Mitchell, forthcoming). The "offlines spaces" that the smart city utopianism creates probably do not correspond anymore to the lines of digital divides, but to the stories of failures, unsuccess, reaction to how the smart city becomes a particular discursive technology - stories that are silenced by the focus on very few actors (big tech corporations, policy-makers) and the neglect of others (like architects, programmers, NGOs, community organisations, etc).

Lastly, as the smart city, at least in Italy, reconfigured the debate around the welfare state. it will be necessary to shift the attention from the discourse to the actual policies of transformation, in order to understand how the smart city reengineers redistribution as a question of urban management and, I have argued, social innovation. There is the risk that the choreography of actors that revolve around the governance of the smart city will inescapably tend to reproduce the same economic, cultural and political coalitions of urban elites. Voluntarism, participation, other mechanisms that are at the basis of the idea that cities themselves will act on their own injustices, are not neutral elements of the overall picture. Indeed, the metaphor of the hacker-city suggests a culture - the hacker culture - that is free, open source, inherently meritocratic, but undeniably elitist (Himanen, 2010). In short, whether the utopian smart city is truly the city of (or for) everyone is still the question to be answered.

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