**ProTalk**

Discussion Files



# C2. Smart cities: utopia or dystopia?

Afaq Language Center

Language Center

www. afaq-lc.com 021-5148 afaq.lc

# Goals

- Can read 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.



**Smart cities** have been **touted** as the solution to the complexities and challenges of **rapidly growing urban populations**.

Urban planners are already harnessing the possibilities of current and projected technologies to craft the **cities of the future**.

Will **technological innovation** deliver on its promise for an **automated and efficient** urban model, or could technology actually create a host of **new problems**?

# 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

**Read the text and summarize it.**

# 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.

**Read the text and summarize it.**

# 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.

**Read the text and summarize it.**

# 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.



## Do you know these words from the text? Discuss the meanings with your teacher and use each in a sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| **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. |

## Do you know these words from the text? Discuss the meanings with your teacher and use each in a sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| **algorithm** | The programmer spotted the problem with the **algorithm.** |
| **grid** | I'm going to spend next month off the **grid.** |
| **citizenry** | It is essential for a healthy democracy to have an informed and educated **citizenry.** |
| **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?

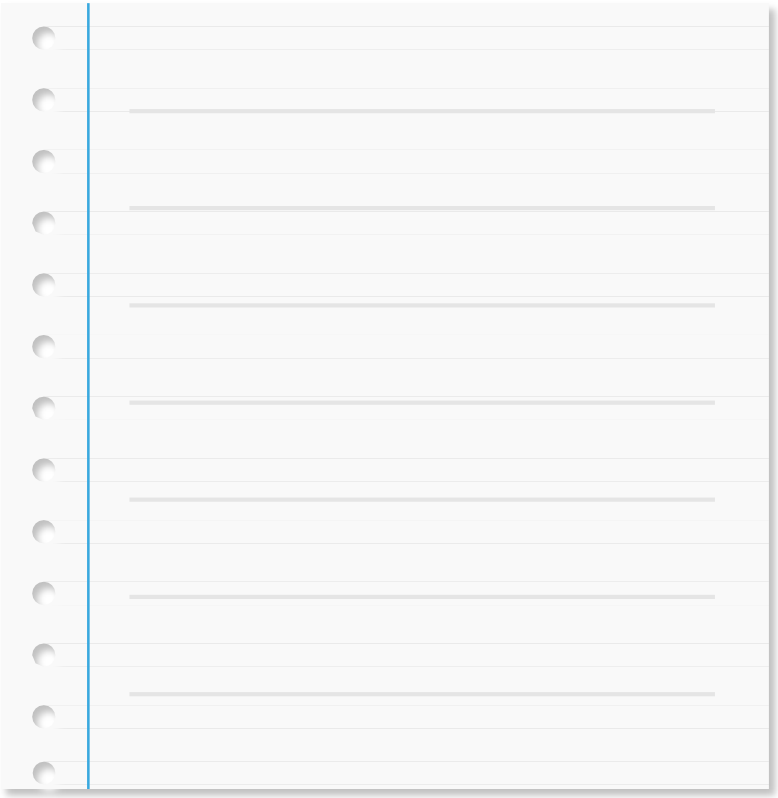
**Talk about some of the potential downsides for citizens living in a smart city.**

**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...

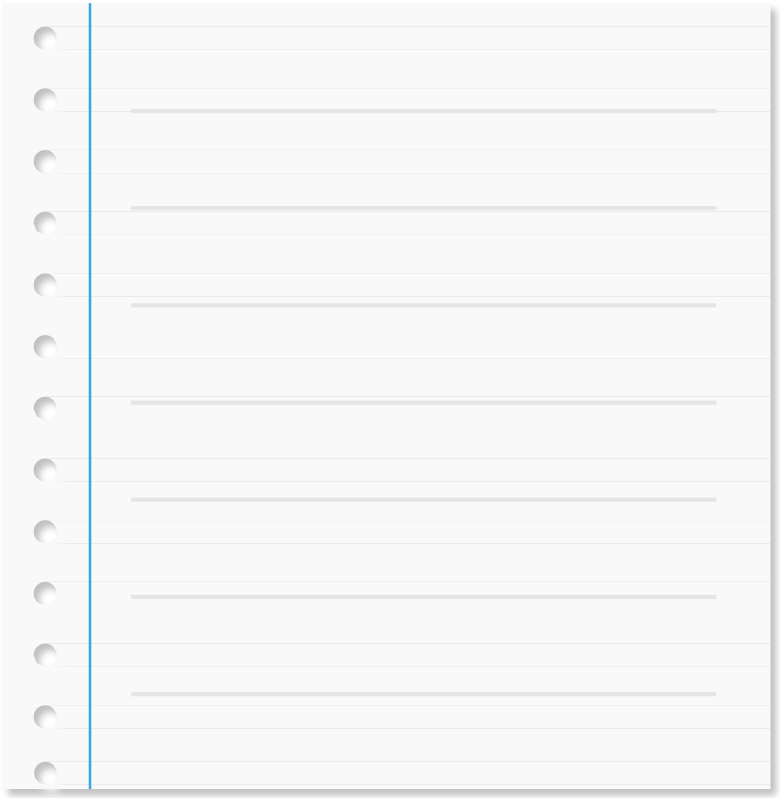
Misuse of personal data by officials.



# Your opinion?

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

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





# 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.**









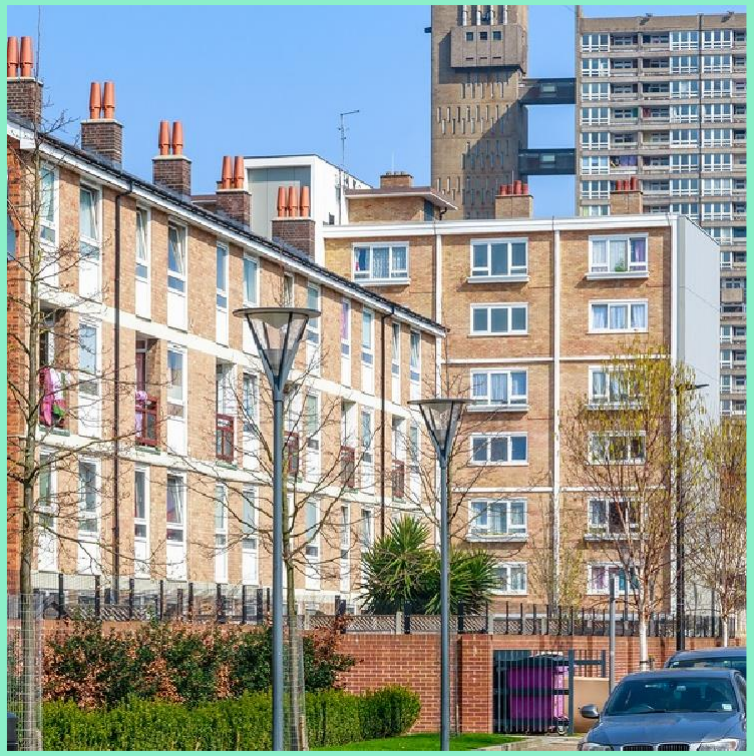
# Concerned citizenry

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.



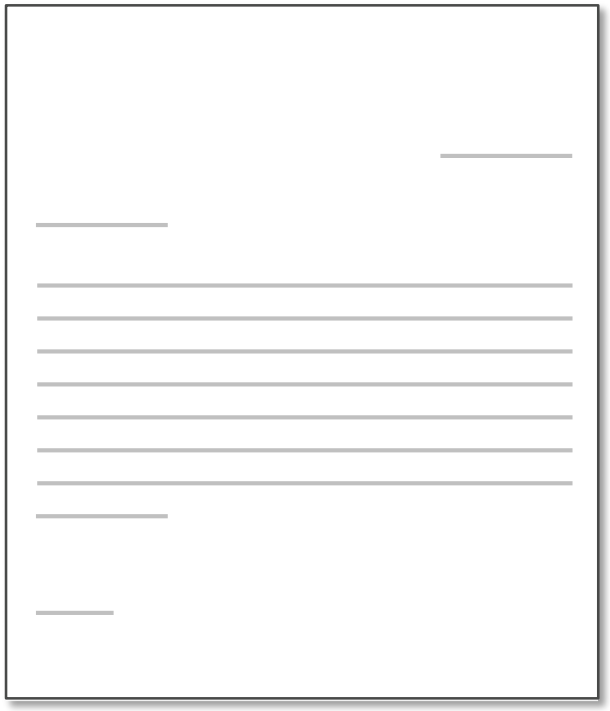
We have concerns about the extent of tracking and surveillance the cameras will have on the community.

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.**



# 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?

# Presentation

Prepare a two-minute presentation about the pros and cons of smart cities. If you can't think of a topic use the ones provided below.

Include several reasons to support your point of view.

Give your presentation to the class. Answer questions and get feedback.

| | |
|---|---|
| greater efficiency | over-reliance on technology |
| surveillance | consequences if systems and networks went down |
| flattening of diversity | degradation of privacy |