

BELAÏD, F., ARORA, A., EDS. (2023). SMART CITIES: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

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The Book *Smart Cities: Social and Environmental Challenges and Opportunities for Local Authorities* is for anyone interested in the future of urban living. The book provides insights and practical advice for navigating the complex intersection of technology, society, and the environment to build cities that are not only smart but also humane and sustainable.

This Book critically examines the potential pitfalls of technology-led urban development, including issues of privacy, surveillance, and the digital divide. The multidisciplinary approach of the book is one of its strong features. This includes threads from urban planning, environmental science, information technology, and social policy, and it offers a holistic view of the smart city landscape. This perspective is crucial for understanding the multifaceted challenges that cities face in the age of digital transformation. The editors used case studies and theoretical explorations that highlight both the challenges and the innovative solutions emerging on the smart city horizon.

Edited by Fateh Belaid and Anvita Arora, the book is a common work of experts who bring their unique perspectives on the smart city phenomenon, chapter by chapter. These contributors explore the gap between technology, society, and the environment, by focusing on what it means to be a 'smart' city nowadays.

The book offers conceptual conclusions about smart cities, underscoring the pivotal role of digital technologies in reshaping urban landscapes. It presents an articulate discourse on how these technologies facilitate the creation of sustainable, efficient, and citizen-centric urban environments. Through a series of researched chapters, the authors and editors delve into the evolution of urban spaces in the digital era, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that emerge from technological advancement with urban development.

A significant impact of this book is in its comprehensive examination of

the environmental implications of smart cities. The authors provide an analysis of how smart technologies can be leveraged to solve and prevent environmental degradation, promote sustainable practices, and enhance resilience to climate change. This discourse is enriched by case studies.

The thematic exploration extends to governance and policy-making topics in the era of smart cities. The book critically assesses the dynamics of power, participation, and accountability, urging a reevaluation of governance structures to ensure they are inclusive, transparent, and conducive to citizen engagement. This impact underscores the necessity of evolving policy frameworks that can adapt to technological change.

The book focuses on the view of smart city initiatives across different cultural and geographical contexts. This comparative approach not only enriches the reader's understanding of the global landscape of smart cities but also highlights the diversity of strategies employed to address urban challenges worldwide.

The book is structured around key themes that include the evolution of smart cities, the role of digital technologies in urban planning, the importance of sustainable and eco-friendly initiatives, and the impact of governance and policy in shaping urban futures. Each chapter contributes to a broader understanding of how smart cities can address environmental and social challenges while highlighting the potential for local authorities to leverage technological advancements for the benefit of their communities, citizens, and neighbourhoods.

Despite its broad scope and insightful analysis, the book sometimes falls short in critically examining the socio-economic disparities that can be exacerbated by technology-driven urban solutions. While the transformative potential of smart technologies in urban planning and governance is essential, it occasionally ignores the digital divide and the uneven distribution of technological benefits. The book could benefit from including a deeper analysis of strategies to mitigate socio-economic inequalities within a smart city. A critical analysis of the ethical implications of data collection, storage, and use in urban management would contribute to a deeper discussion. It would be valuable to explore the balance between using data for urban improvements and protecting individual privacy rights while providing guidelines for the ethical management of smart cities.

The environmental impact from a point of view is another area that should have a more critical approach. While the book effectively encourages the environmental benefits of smart cities, for example, reduced carbon footprints and improved resource efficiency, authors could further explore the lifecycle environmental costs of these technologies.

Smart Cities: Social and Environmental Challenges and Opportunities for Local Authorities in its depth offers a panoramic view of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the transition towards smarter, more sustainable urban environments. The book's impact is in its role to catalyse dialogue among a diver-

se array of stakeholders, from government officials and technology providers to community organizations and the public (citizens). By promoting a collaborative approach to urban development (based on smart technologies), the book underscores the importance of inclusivity and stakeholder engagement in creating such cities that are not just technologically advanced but also socially equitable and environmentally responsible.

The publication stands out for its ability to inspire innovative thinking even through a collection of case studies, theoretical explorations, and practical applications about the potential transformations that await cities around the globe. In essence, the significance and impact of this book are in its comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the smart city paradigm. It not only equips its readers with the knowledge to understand and navigate the challenges of urban digital transformation but also inspires others with a vision of what cities can become through the implementation of technology. As such, it is an invaluable resource for anyone creating more liveable, sustainable, and equitable urban spaces.

Smart Cities: Social and Environmental Challenges and Opportunities for Local Authorities makes a timely and critical contribution to the discourse on smart urban development. At a moment when cities around the world are grappling with unprecedented challenges, not only from climate change but also from resource scarcity with impact to social inequality and rapid urbanization, this book offers a way to prevent it and let's say, a solution. It provides not just a compendium of challenges and opportunities but also acts as a guidebook for urbanists, stakeholders, citizens, and researchers.

The editors, Fateh Belaid and Anvita Arora, along with a group of contributors, have skillfully multifaceted nature of smart cities. Through their collective efforts, they present a narrative that is both rich in detail and broad in scope, covering the technological, environmental, and social dimensions of smart urbanism. This book can provide a rethinking of traditional approaches to urban planning and development.

Furthermore, the book's practical guidance and insights are particularly valuable for practitioners (mostly) in the field. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this book empowers policymakers, urban planners, and community leaders with the tools and solutions, with the knowledge needed to implement smart city initiatives effectively not only in cities but also in their neighbours.

In conclusion, *Smart Cities: Social and Environmental Challenges and Opportunities for Local Authorities* stands as a pivotal work in the evolving narrative of urban development. It successfully charts a course toward a future where technology and innovation are harnessed to create urban spaces that are not only efficient and resilient but also deeply attuned to the needs and well-being of their inhabitants (citizens). As cities continue to grow and evolve, the insights and guidance offered by this book will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping

their development, making it an indispensable resource for anyone engaged in the work of implementation for smarter, more sustainable urban future areas.

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