

The aim of the project is to investigate the consequences of technological development in the context of urban life. We want to understand how digitization and new technologies can shape the quality of life of city users, influence cities development and policies. We are particularly interested in how technology can influence the implementation of the principles of democracy, equality and social justice in cities. Based on existing sociological and psychological theories – including the recent concept of “digital right to the city” – we want to answer the question about the impact of technological innovations on the well-being of urban dwellers, social cohesion and the quality of local democracy, understood as the ability of citizens to articulate their interests and participate in making decisions about the direction of city development.

In the area of social science, there is insufficient research into the social and psychological consequences of implementing modern technologies in the context of the quality of life of urban residents and condition of urban democracy. The project will focus on filling this gap by carrying out basic research to better understand the implications of technology implementation in cities around the world. In part of the research, we will focus on the cases of Singapore and Tallinn – world leaders in terms of implementing smart cities solutions; and Warsaw, where modern technologies for city management are intensively implemented under the slogan of streamlining democratic processes, and which faces increasing challenges related to resource management, social conflicts, decline in social integration and low attachment to places. On the example of Singapore, Tallinn and Warsaw, we will analyse concrete policies and smart city solutions to see if they are implemented at the expense of quality of life and democracy. We will start with the premise that ICT can also have a significant impact on how urban citizens perceive their rights and responsibilities toward local environment, shaping their behaviour towards other residents, places and local governments.

The research will contribute to 1) formulating the theory of right to the smart city, based on the results of basic research and existing literature, and 2) exploring the challenges of growing city technology and potential solutions in the spirit of right to the city. Building on Henri Lefebvre's reflections, we ask how technology can help solve urban problems by giving citizens the right to a city on an individual, social and political level. We believe that without better scientific tools to assess the reactions of residents, local communities and urban institutions to the technological development, we risk creating cities that serve technocrats and bureaucracies rather than citizens as primary users of urban goods and services.

To accomplish the above goals we intend to carry out a number of studies, including correlational, experimental and qualitative research, as well as social media analysis. Our research activities will concern two levels: the political level (urban policy analysis) and social (impact of technological development on social relations and individual wellbeing). We start with the premise that ICT can have a significant impact on how urban residents perceive their rights and responsibilities to the local environment, shaping their behaviour towards other residents, places and local governments. As Dean (2017) points out, improving the city for everyone begins with ensuring technology enhances democracy, which means translating the right to the city idea into technological solutions and policymaking that recognises a citizen's right to mobilise technology to shape urban spaces and to benefit from urban data.

The results of the project will contribute to a better understanding of the social and psychological consequences of implementing modern technologies for the quality of life of urban residents and urban democracies. In addition, the results of the project will help answer the question of how to help solve urban problems with technology, while providing citizens with the right to decide on the shape of the city in which they live.