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Smart Cities in the Age of Digital Revolution

Contributing Editor at The New republic, Evgeny Morozov, questions the agenda behind smart cities during the 11th edition of Trento Economics Festival, "Where growth takes place". Addressing how authorities can better control companies, such as Airbnb and Google, he emphasizes the key to capitalism is now through Silicon Valley and the technology sector.

In order to understand the origin of Smart Cities, we have to look at the discourse between technology and urbanism. This discourse stimulates constant pressure on cities to not only be sustainable or green, but to be competitive against one another. In this context, the smart city finds itself on fertile territory. There is a corporate driven effort to then create smart efficient innovations to produce sustainability. But this is not in favor of the citizens, and often times not transparent.

The introduction of the welfare state and the government's ability to turn to debt and find allies in the banking and financial sectors in the 70's, has shown how capitalism has dealt with the economies most vulnerable moments. These mechanisms have allowed for capitalism to buy more time, but by the 2008 global crisis, the traditional ways to cope were no longer acceptable. "Silicon Valley has become the greatest advocates for basic citizens' income in society today." Morozov continued Silicon Valley and technology firms offered hope of salvation and a positive narrative out of the crisis. The middle class that has been hurt by the crisis sees hope in apps such as Uber and Airbnb to make their belongings into tradable commodities, creating a certain resilience in a system under immense pressure.

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