**Introduction**

In the last few years many cities have created and implemented policies and programmes intended to transform them into a ‘smart city’. To that end, city administrations, often partnering with companies, have adopted a variety of networked technologies to mediate the management of city services and regulate city life (e.g., city operating systems, urban control rooms, coordinated emergency management response systems, intelligent transport systems, smart grids, smart lighting, sensor-networks, etc.). These have been complemented by a number of initiatives and services produced and delivered by companies and civic organizations, such as mobile/locative media and the sharing economy (using digital platforms to connect distributed groups of people to more efficient use of goods, skills and other resources). However, the mission to produce smart cities has been critiqued for being overly technocratic and top-down in orientation, serving the interests of states and corporations more than they do those of citizens (Greenfield, 2013; Kitchin, 2014b). According to these critiques, smart city initiatives enact forms of algorithmic governance that control and discipline citizens, as well as being tools to produce and reinforce neoliberal logics of urban management and entrepreneurial urban development (Datta, 2015; Greenfield, 2013; Kitchin, Coletta, & McArdle, 2017; Sadowski & Pasquale, 2015; Shelton, Zook, & Wiig, 2015; Vanolo, 2016). In other words, smart city initiatives are said to be underpinned by a neoliberal conception of citizenship that favours consumption choice and individual autonomy within a framework of constraints that prioritize market-led solutions to urban issues, reinforced through practices of stewardship (for citizens) and civic paternalism (deciding what is best for citizens) enacted by states and companies, rather than being grounded in civil, social and political rights and the common good (Clark & Shelton, 2016; Gabrys, 2014; McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2016).

In response to these critiques, the developers, promoters and deployers of smart city technologies and initiatives have sought to reposition them as being citizen- or community-centric. For example, in their marketing material, companies such as IBM and Cisco have declared that their solutions are now “citizen-focused”.[[1]](#footnote-2) Since 2011 the European Commission has branded its funding programmes for creating smart cities the ‘European Innovation Partnership for Smart Cities and Communities’ (EIP-SCC)[[2]](#footnote-3) with a dedicated “citizen-focus” cluster. Likewise, cities have branded their smart city programmes and initiatives as “citizen-focused”. However, such a re-formulation appears to be a re-branding

1. <https://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/smarter_cities/overview/> <http://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/industries/smart-connected-communities.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [https://eu-smartcities.eu](https://eu-smartcities.eu/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)