

Chapter 17

Building Civic Engagement in Smart Cities: Role of Smart Libraries

Adebowale Jeremy Adetayo

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7869-5613>

Adeleke University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Climate change, poverty, and economic inequality are some of the threats to civilization in today's cities. This has given rise to the development of smart cities as a solution to the threat. However, this smart initiative did not solve the problem. In the face of this predicament, in order for cities to maintain their position, civic engagement must be undertaken by involving citizens in finding a collective solution with the support of smart library. Cities cannot plan or position themselves effectively until they grasp and exploit the existence of the smart library. The chapter explores the practical application of smart libraries to civic engagement. It identifies smart library strategies for building civic engagement in smart cities. The chapter also identifies possible challenges to smart library initiatives in smart cities and makes recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Society is constantly facing severe challenges in the 21st century, from climate change to poverty to economic inequalities. To address these urgent challenges and achieve a better and more sustainable future that leaves no one behind, governments, organizations, civil society and individuals must work together to do their part (Le Blanc, 2015). They need to keep up to date with the latest developments and contribute to civic activities; this commitment should be based on an informed and critical reflection on political and civic issues (Van Camp & Baugh, 2016). This process is called civic engagement.

Civic engagement is a broader term. It is not limited to political activity and involves participating in civil relations such as charitable community events (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). The value of civic engagement in smart cities cannot be overemphasized. As Boukhris et al. (2016) reported, civic engage-

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ment is considered an essential dimension for creating a smart city- a modern community model emerging from the rapid development of digital technology and innovation processes. This is supported by Gooch et al. (2015), who suggest that smart cities would concentrate on citizens rather than innovations, or better, as Desouza and Bhagwatwar (2014) suggested, use the ability of technologies to promote public participation by implementing technology-enabled participatory civic engagement platforms. In part, civic participation may be viewed as a product of awareness of the value of civic duties. Apart from serving as the pillar of an effective city and a prosperous future, civic engagement and knowledge have a bearing on vital civic qualities such that civic knowledge encourages democratic ideals, political activity, confidence in public figures and can shift attitudes on critical political issues (Coley & Sum, 2012).

However, the extensive scale and complexities of cities make many people feel helpless or inadequate and minimize the expectation that their actions will make a difference (Mulligan, 2014). This is not the case, though, as people's participation, both personally and socially, is key to resolving huge social problems (Swinburn et al., 2019). People may serve as agents of reform in their positions as parents, clients, workers, bosses, residents and elected officials. Their influence has an immense impact at the micro level, but people still can build influence at the macro level (Labrecque et al., 2013), which can be especially encouraged by technologies in smart cities.

Smart cities are a multibillion-dollar enterprise that aims to transform the way we live, function and sustain human communities on Earth. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) enables communities to apply new solutions to promote economic growth, improve people's quality of life, and make the community smarter overall (Anthopoulos, 2015). These municipalities will use innovative information, sensing, and networking technology to work more effectively, enhance urban services, and improve the lives of their people. Recently, researchers have increasingly concentrated on improving the social facets of smart cities: quality of living, public participation and engagement (Gascó, 2016).

Historically, cities in the developed world have been based on concepts of shared infrastructure and mutual interest. Moreover, while public/private collaborations have always been influential in the growth of cities, smart city technology expresses itself in a pervasive fashion that tracks and stores massive quantities of data. As these innovations become more ubiquitous in cities, the key question remains: who owns and benefits from the data generated by smart cities and their citizens? One solution is to make city data as accessible as possible. There is a new precedent for city councils to take the lead in incorporating technological and computational systems into governance so that people can conveniently access public resources and services on web-based networks. Although city councils are not solely concerned with data, computing, and hardware, there are broad and influential organizations working as smart city collaborators. If urban services, utilities and environments continue to offer growing possibilities for data collection, opportunities will be developed to learn and implement new solutions from these data.

If we want smart cities that are also equal cities, there must be civic engagement frameworks that connect people to the services that they help support, generate and maintain. It is crucial to have an atmosphere in which people have a chance to be involved in decision-making at the intersection of human society and livelihoods. In brief, we need to visualize the smart cities project and civic engagement inside them, just as we have been thinking about smart libraries for a long time.

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