

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Platform Urbanism

Dr Sarah Barns of the Institute for Culture and Society is examining the role of technology, government data and citizen participation as a platform for urban innovation and development. This project is funded by the Urban Studies Foundation through their Fellowship Postdoctoral Research Fellowship scheme.

'Modern urban development is now heavily influenced by technology and information,' says Dr Barns. 'The cities of today can now be viewed as innovative ecosystems with its citizens, technology, entrepreneurs, researchers and government bodies co-creating public services and urban development using "Big Data". Some examples of the use of such data include 'apps' for public transport or emergency management. But technology specialists and strategists (data "infomediaries") are now playing a significant role in urban policy making without necessarily having adequate prior knowledge. How much these infomediaries are *driving* urban development and how much they are being regulated remains to be seen. This project will examine their role in producing urban innovation and knowledge, as well as determine how "open" or accessible these platforms actually are, who gets to access them and how this actually affects urban governance.'

Using interviews and participant observation, three case studies will examine:

1. How a popular information system that allows municipal governments to publish their open data in the 'cloud' is used.
2. Urban innovation and citizen engagement in the rebuilding of Christchurch, New Zealand.
3. The promotion of innovation systems and creative industries in Shanghai, China.



A new critical framework will be developed that addresses any forms of exclusion, uneven urban development and varying technologies of entrepreneurship. Online resources will be produced for accessibility to research outcomes.

Understanding the new ways that urban management is designed and implemented in the age of "Big Data", as well as interactive citizen participation will help shape urban planning and policy as urbanised societies of the 21st century proactively respond to their rapidly changing environment and associated modern challenges.

Project Title: Platform Urbanism: The role of city labs, data infomediaries and open government experiments in urban governance

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