## Comment & Debate

# Cities do best when they're messy, like real life is

**Richard Sennett**

The urbanists gathering in London would do well to remember that the utopias of the past often turned to nightmares

This week London hosts a jamboree of computer geeks, politicians, and urban planners from around the world. At the Urban Age conference, they will discuss the latest whizz idea in high tech, the "smart city". Doing more than programming traffic, the smart city's computers will calculate where offices and shops can be laid out most efficiently, where people should sleep, and how all the parts of urban life should be fitted together. Science fiction? Smart cities are being built in the Middle East and in Korea; they have become a model for developers in China, and for redevelopment in Europe. Thanks to the digital revolution, at last life in cities can be brought under control. But is this a good thing?

You don't have to be a romantic to doubt it. In the 1930s the American urbanist Lewis Mumford foresaw the disaster entailed by "scientific planning" of transport, embodied in the super-efficient highway, choking the city. The Swiss architecture critic Sigfried Giedion worried that after the second world war efficient building technologies would produce a soulless landscape of glass, steel, and concrete boxes. Yesterday's smart city, today's nightmare.

The debate about good engineering has changed now because digital technology has shifted the technological focus to information processing; this can occur in handheld computers linked to "clouds", or in command-and-control centres. The danger now is that this information-rich city may do nothing to help people think for themselves or communicate well with one another.

Imagine that you are a master planner facing a blank computer screen and that you can design a city from scratch, free to incorporate every bit of high technology into your design. You might come up with Masdar, in the United Arab Emirates, or Songdo, in South Korea. These are two versions of the stupefying smart city: Masdar the more famous, or infamous; Songdo the more fascinating in a perverse way.

Masdar is a half-built city rising out of the desert, whose planning - overseen by the master architect Norman Foster - comprehensively lays out the activities of the city, the technology monitoring and regulating the function from a central command centre. The city is conceived in "Fordist" terms - that is, each activity has an appropriate place and time. Urbanites become consumers of choices laid out for them by prior calculations of where to shop, or to get a doctor, most efficiently. There's no stimulation through trial and error; people learn their city passively. "User-friendly" in Masdar means choosing menu options rather than creating the menu.

Creating your own, new menu entails, as it were, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In mid 20th-century Boston, for instance, its new "brain industries" developed in places where the planners never imagined they could grow. Masdar - like London's new "ideas quarter" around Old Street - on the contrary assumes a clairvoyant sense of what should grow where. The smart city is over-zoned, defying the fact that real development in cities is often haphazard, or in between the cracks of what's allowed.

Songdo represents the stupefying smart city in its architectural aspect - massive, clean, efficient housing blocks rising up in the shadow of South Korea's western mountains, like an inflated 1960s British housing estate - but now heat, security, parking and deliveries are all controlled by a central Songdo "brain". The massive units of housing are not conceived as structures with any individuality in themselves, nor is the ensemble of these faceless buildings meant to create a sense of place.

Uniform architecture need not inevitably produce a dead environment, if there is some flexibility on the ground; in New York, for instance, along parts of Third Avenue monotonous residential towers are subdivided on street level into small, irregular shops and cafes; they give a good sense of neighbourhood. But in Songdo, lacking that principle of diversity within the block, there is nothing to be learned from walking the streets.

A more intelligent attempt to create a smart city comes from work currently under way in Rio de Janeiro. Rio has a long history of devastating flash floods, made worse socially by widespread poverty and violent crime. In the past people survived thanks to the complex tissues of local life; the new information technologies are now helping them, in a very different way to Masdar and Songdo. Led by IBM, with help by Cisco and other subcontractors, the technologies have been applied to forecasting physical disasters, to co-ordinating responses to traffic crises, and to organising police work on crime. The principle here is co-ordination rather than, as in Masdar and Songdo, prescription.

But isn't this comparison unfair? Wouldn't people in the favelas prefer, if they had a choice, the pre-organised, already planned place in which to live? After all, everything works in Songdo. A great deal of research during the last decade, in cities as different as Mumbai and Chicago, suggests that once basic services are in place people don't value efficiency above all; they want quality of life. A hand-held GPS device won't, for instance, provide a sense of community. More, the prospect of an orderly city has not been a lure for voluntary migration, neither to European cities in the past nor today to the sprawling cities of South America and Asia. If they have a choice, people want a more open, indeterminate city in which to make their way; this is how they can come to take ownership over their lives.

There's nothing wicked about the smart city confab London is hosting this week. Technology is a great tool, when it's used responsively, as in Rio. But a city is not a machine; as in Masdar and Songdo, this version of the city can deaden and stupefy the people who live in its all-efficient embrace. We want cities that work well enough, but are open to the shifts, uncertainties, and mess which are real life.

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*Richard Sennett is a professor of sociology at the London School of Economics*

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# Electric City 2012: graphic highlights from LSE's conference on the urban age

The 2012 LSE Cities conference explores how urban societies across the world are adapting to and embracing technological innovation and environmental change. We have been given exclusive access to some of the data visualisations on display at the event

• More data journalism and data visualisations from the Guardian

Posted by
John Burn-Murdoch
Thursday 6 December
2012 12.18 GMT
guardian.co.uk
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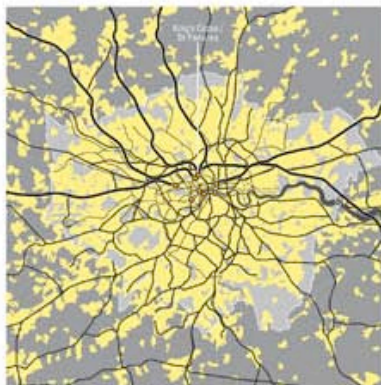
**London**                    **New York**

Proximity to rapid transit stations in selected cities, broken down by residential and commercial property. Click for larger image

Electric City, the 2012 edition of LSE Cities' conference series, takes place today and tomorrow at the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society.

This year's event is focusing on the different ways in which urban societies across the globe are being influenced by technological and environmental change. You can watch a live video feed from the conference here.

The conference publication includes a wealth of detailed graphics covering topics including transport, energy consumption, pollution and urban planning, as well as a visualisation-rich case study on London.

Below is a selection of the maps and charts on show, along with a summary of some of the most interesting patterns that emerge:

**Global development**
Cities and development

**World news**
Urbanisation · New York

**UK news**
London

**Business**
Technology sector

**Politics**
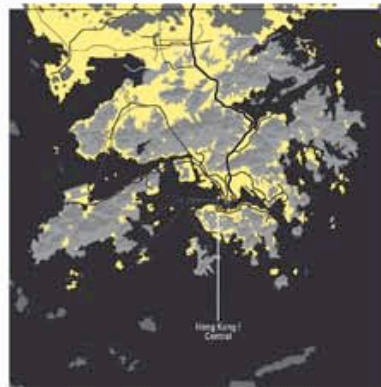Planning policy

**Travel**
Cycling holidays

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London School of Economics and Political Science

## Proximity to public transport



New York    Hong Kong

Proximity to rapid transit stations in selected cities, broken down by residential and commercial property. Click for larger image

Hong Kong's residents are the best-connected, with over 40% living within a 500m radius of a rapid transit station. The city also scores highest for commuting, with over half its places of work less than half a kilometre from a station.

Stockholm scores second highest in both categories, while New York and London are third for residents and commuters respectively. Los Angeles scores lowest for each category, with less than 5% of its residents living within 500m of a station.

## How people travel
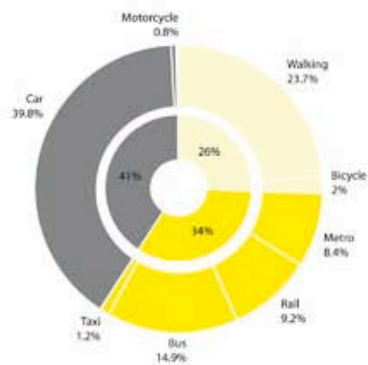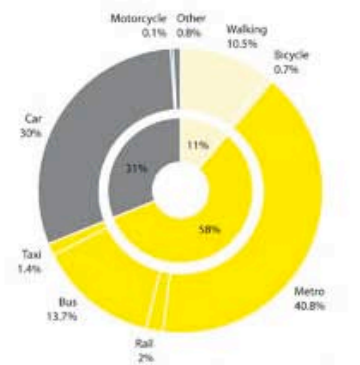


London    New York

This data shows work travel only.

Methods of transport in selected cities. London has the highest proportion of trips made by car. Click for larger image

Of the six cities shown, London has the highest proportion of trips made by car, at 39.8%. Public transport accounts for 34% of journeys, while walking (23.7%), cycling (2%) and motorcycle trips (0.8%) make up the remainder.

New York scores highest for public transport, with almost three in every five commuter trips made by taxi, bus, rail or metro.

Hong Kong fares best for walking, with 44.7% of journeys made on foot. Copenhagen leads the way for cycling, with one in five trips powered by pedals.

## How cities change

**Bogota**          **Singapore**

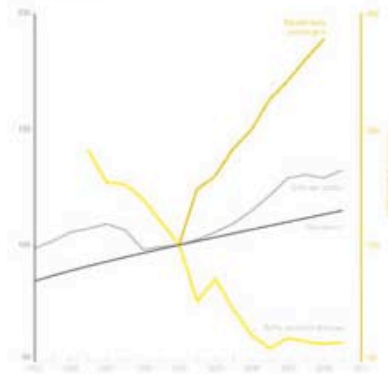Changes in measures including population, emissions and transport, shown for
selected major cities across different continents and states of economic
development. Click for larger image

Portland's CO2 emissions per capita have halved since 1993.
Copenhagen's energy consumption per capita has fallen by around 20%
since 1993, with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per capita dropping
at a slightly faster rate.

Singapore's population has risen steadily, and TransMilenio, its public
transport system, has seen passenger numbers double since its 2001
launch. Despite its growing population, traffic incident fatalities have
more than halved since the late 1990s.

Cycling in Hong Kong has been booming in the last 20 years, and is one
of the factors that have contributed to its falling CO2 emissions per
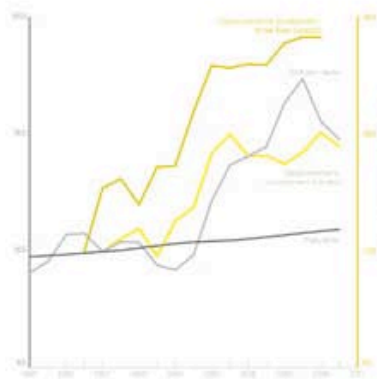capita.
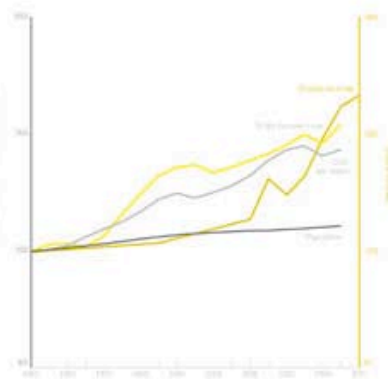
**London**          **New York**

Changes in measures including population, emissions and transport, shown for
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development. Click for larger image

Around the year 2000 London's technology sector really took off, and
employment in the digital economy has increased by almost 50% since
1997. Taking inner East London as a standalone region, high tech
employment has nearly doubled in 15 years.

Mumbai's rapid population growth is symptomatic of nationwide trends, and has come at an environmental cost, with CO2 emissions per capita for India as a whole increasing at a faster rate than the port city's population. Peak electricity demand in Mumbai has also rocketed upwards, increasing by over 75% in ten years.

Berlin's population has remained relatively constant since 1993, but a decreasing reliance on non-renewable energy across Germany as a whole has improved its environmental credentials. The capital's CO2 emissions per capita have dropped by over 30% in 18 years.

Vehicle ownership in Sao Paulo is booming, but traffic speeds during evening rush hour have fallen since 1993, suggesting its road network is struggling to cope with congestion.

## Unpacking London: energy & pollution
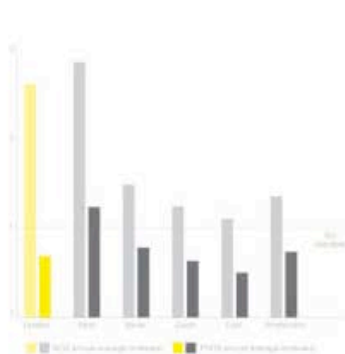


European cities' air pollution compared
Source: Clean: www.sequalitynow.eu

Air pollution: nitrogen dioxide
Source: London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory 2008

Data on energy and pollution in London, mapped and analysed over time. Click for larger image

Three quarters of London's energy consumption is fueled directly by oil and gas, with the vast majority of the remainder generated by fossil-fuel-powered electricity. Just 2.1% comes either direct from waste and renewables or from renewably-generated electricity.

London's CO2 emissions per capita are higher than the world average, but lower than those of comparable developed cities New York and Portland, as well as Singapore.

Landfill is gradually being phased out as a method of solid waste management, but still accounted for roughly one third of the total in 2011/12. Incineration and recycling/composting also make up around a third each.

London's air contains more than 2.5 times as much NO2 than the EU standard - still slightly less than Paris - but is well below the EU's recommended ceiling for particulate matter. PM10 counts in Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam are all higher than that of London.

NO2 levels closely follow London's road network, with Heathrow Airport and the M4 standing out as particularly high.

## Unpacking London: transport, tech and planning



**London urban development 2004 – 2011**
Source: London Development Database (2012), Greater London Authority
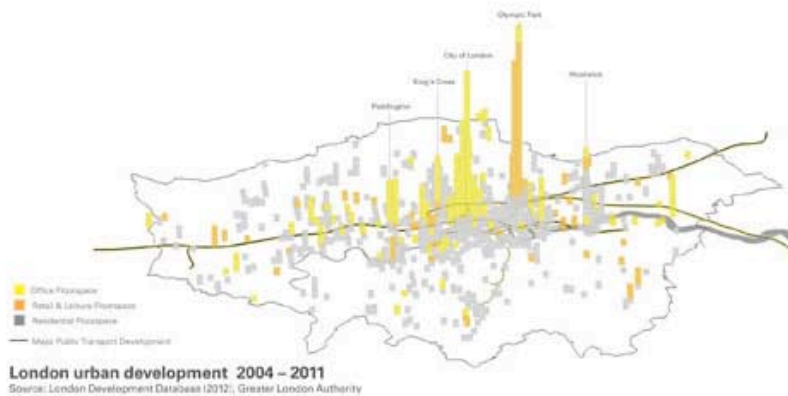
Data on transport, planning and the digital economy in London, mapped and analysed over time. Click for larger image

Since 1993 car travel has decreased faster in London than across the UK as a whole, and average annual distance traveled per person in 2011 was roughly half of that for the country overall. Bus, tube and overground travel continues to grow, with distance traveled on public transport approaching the same level as car miles.

Cycling has taken off in London, with the number of cyclists in the capital trebling since 1985, and overtaking that of both New York and Stockholm. Berlin remains ahead of London on this nominal measure, and at 13% has one of the highest proportions of cycle trips a share of all journeys.

London's office space is well served by public transport links: almost 1m cubic metres was built between 2004 and 2011 within 500m of a station, with no new office construction more than 2km from a public transport hub.

The City of London has seen more new office space than any other part of the capital, while the bulk of retail and leisure floorspace has gone to the Olympic Park and surrounding area.

Shoreditch has the highest density of IT jobs in the city, followed by Holborn and parts of the City of London. Despite its strong performance in the digital economy, London has slower broadband speeds (both download and upload) than European neighbours including Berlin, Paris and Copenhagen, as well as Tokyo and Seoul, whose speeds are several times faster.

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Data journalism and data visualisations from the Guardian

Guardian Online, 6 December 2012

David Cameron speaks at the Electric City Conference today in London. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

**David Cameron** has announced a £50m investment in "Tech City" this morning. Here's the story from the Press Association.

❝ David Cameron and Boris Johnson have unveiled plans to transform Tech City in east London.

The Old Street roundabout is to be given a £50m makeover to become a centre for technology start-ups and entrepreneurs. It will become Europe's largest civic indoor space, hosting classrooms and workshops equipped with the latest 3D printing technology.

Several large international firms have also announced new investments in the area, including Microsoft, IBM and KPMG.

Cameron hailed the success of the capital's technology industry at the Urban Age Electric City Conference in Shoreditch.

The prime minister said: "Two years ago I set out my commitment to help Tech City become one of the world's great technology centres.

"Today we are seeing it continue to grow and go from strength to strength - and that is down to the talented, creative entrepreneurs who have set up there.

"The UK is in a global race and I am determined that we as a Government continue doing everything we can to equip the UK to compete and thrive in that race.

"As well as backing the businesses of today, we are creating an aspiration nation and also backing the innovative, high-growth businesses of the future.

"That's why we're investing in creating the largest civic space in Europe - a place for start-up companies and the local community to come together and become the next generation of entrepreneurs."

Software giant Microsoft revealed it is to establish a technology development centre in the heart of Tech City to provide expertise and guidance for people with new and innovative ideas.

KPMG, the professional services company, is to open an office in Shoreditch with a dedicated team to support early stage technology companies, and technology firm IBM is to bring its global entrepreneur programme to the area.

Updated at 11.08am GMT

# London Mayor And British Prime Minister Address The Electric City Conference

By Peter Macdiarmid (GETTY) – **4 days ago** 👍+1 〈 0 〉



LONDON, ENGLAND - DECEMBER 06: London Mayor Boris Johnson (R) shakes hands with Prime Minister David Cameron at the The Electric City Conference on December 6, 2012 in London, England. The conference is looking at how the combined forces of technological innovation and the global environment crisis are affecting urban society. (Photo by Peter Macdiarmid - WPA Pool/Getty Images)

# PM unveils Tech City transformation

David Cameron said Tech City had grown from 'strength to strength' since its launch two years ago

06 December 2012

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Mayor of London Mr Johnson said: "Our new centre will provide not only a vital resource to nurture upcoming technology and creative superstars from around the world, it will drive huge investment into the capital and help create thousands of jobs."

Glenn Shoosmith, chief executive of online booking firm Bookingbug, was one of a number of representatives from Tech City-based firms to meet the Prime Minister during a visit to the Central Working business hub in Shoreditch. He claimed the regeneration of the Old Street roundabout was an important boost.

Mr Shoosmith said: "You've got an area at the moment that is partly loved and partly hated so any change is always going to be controversial. But this kind of urban regeneration needs doing. You get to Old Street and you're supposed to see all these tech companies. All you see is a not very nice roundabout and a not particularly great Underground area at Old Street station."

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# Tech City Silicon Roundabout: PM and Mayor announce redevelopment



**6 December 2012** Last updated at 13:56

Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson have unveiled plans to transform Silicon Roundabout, also known as Tech City.

The government is supporting the area in Old Street, east London, in a bid to turn it into a high tech hub for the UK.

David Cameron announced that new firms, including Microsoft, are locating themselves at the site, and he also announced a major redevelopment at the roundabout.

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**Sprucing up Silicon Roundabout**

## UK

# PM UNVEILS TECH CITY TRANSFORMATION

Thursday December 6, 2012

💬 Have your say(0)

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## Columnists

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# The overly-smart city?

by **Richard Sennett**
04:45 AM Dec 06, 2012

This week London hosts a jamboree of computer geeks, politicians and urban planners from around the world. At the Urban Age conference, they will discuss the latest idea in high tech, the "smart city".

Doing more than programming traffic, the smart city's computers will calculate where offices and shops can be laid out most efficiently, where people should sleep and how all the parts of urban life should be fitted together.

Science fiction? Smart cities are being built in the Middle East and in Korea; they have become a model for developers in China and for redevelopment in Europe.

Thanks to the digital revolution, at last life in cities can be brought under control. But is this a good thing?



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## TOMORROW'S NIGHTMARE

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## OVER-ZONED

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QUALITY OF LIFE OVER EFFICIENCY

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Richard Sennett is a professor of sociology at the London School of Economics.

## London

1:46PM, THU 6 DEC 2012   TECH CITY TRANSFORMATION

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Last updated Thu 6 Dec 2012

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"Today we are seeing it continue to grow and go from strength to strength - and that is down to the talented, creative entrepreneurs who have set up there"

Mayor Boris Johnson said "The time is right to lay solid foundations in Tech City for London's digital revolution, and this list of major new firms committing to the area is a testament to the confidence leading tech entrepreneurs have in the capital"

"Our new centre will provide not only a vital resource to nurture upcoming technology and creative superstars from around the world, it will drive huge investment into the capital and help create thousands of jobs."

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## technology news

PRESS ASSOCIATION                                    6 December 2012, 10:26

### PM unveils Tech City transformation

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David Cameron and Boris Johnson have unveiled plans to transform Tech City in east London.

The Old Street roundabout is to be given a £50 million makeover to become a centre for technology start-ups and entrepreneurs. It will become Europe's largest civic indoor space, hosting classrooms and workshops equipped with the latest 3D printing technology.

Several large international firms have also announced new investments in the area, including Microsoft, IBM and KPMG.

Mr Cameron hailed the success of the capital's technology industry at the Urban Age Electric City Conference in Shoreditch.

The Prime Minister said: "Two years ago I set out my commitment to help Tech City become one of the world's great technology centres. Today we are seeing it continue to grow and go from strength to strength – and that is down to the talented, creative entrepreneurs who have set up there.

"The UK is in a global race and I am determined that we as a Government continue doing everything we can to equip the UK to compete and thrive in that race. As well as backing the businesses of today, we are creating an aspiration nation and also backing the innovative, high-growth businesses of the future."

Software giant Microsoft revealed it is to establish a technology development centre in the heart of Tech City to provide expertise and guidance for people with new and innovative ideas. KPMG, the professional services company, is to open an office in Shoreditch with a dedicated team to support early stage technology companies, and technology firm IBM is to bring its global entrepreneur programme to the area.

Mayor of London Mr Johnson said: "Our new centre will provide not only a vital resource to nurture upcoming technology and creative superstars from around the world, it will drive huge investment into the capital and help create thousands of jobs."

Glenn Shoosmith, chief executive of online booking firm Bookingbug, was one of a number of representatives from Tech City-based firms to meet the Prime Minister during a visit to the Central Working business hub in Shoreditch. He claimed the regeneration of the Old Street roundabout was an important boost.

Mr Shoosmith said: "You've got an area at the moment that is partly loved and partly hated so any change is always going to be controversial. But this kind of urban regeneration needs doing. You get to Old Street and you're supposed to see all these tech companies. All you see is a not very nice roundabout and a not particularly great Underground area at Old Street station."

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**Dec 6 2012**

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"That's why we're investing in creating the largest civic space in Europe - a place for start-up companies and the local community to come together and become the next generation of entrepreneurs."

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# Express & Star

December 6, 2012 10:30 am

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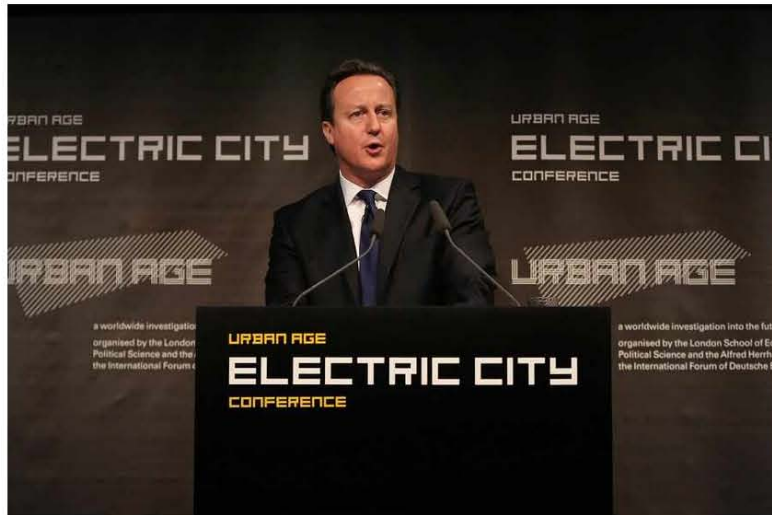


David Cameron said Tech City had grown from 'strength to strength' since its launch two years ago

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06 December 2012

# Neil Crockett to lead Connected Digital Economy Catapult

Neil Crockett is the new chief exec at the Connected Digital Economy Catapult – the technology centre aimed at helping industry to develop digital and internet enabled products and services.

Crockett joins the London-based Catapult from Cisco, where he held several roles, including managing director – British Telecom worldwide operations from 2006, and managing director – London 2012, overseeing Cisco's Olympics sponsorship.

Speaking at the Urban Age Electric City conference in London today (6 December 2012), Universities and Science Minister David Willetts, said: "I am pleased to welcome Neil as CEO of the centre – his knowledge and expertise will ensure its future success."

And he added: "The UK has one of the world's strongest digital markets and the Connected Digital Economy Catapult will build on this by fostering innovation and driving growth across the £100 billion ICT, software and digital content sectors."

Commenting on his appointment, Crockett said: "It is a privilege to lead the new Connected Digital Economy Catapult and have the opportunity to accelerate the translation of the UK's world class digital discovery and innovation into new and sustained economic success."

The Technology Strategy Board hopes that, by providing access to test and demonstrator facilities, the new Catapult will "encourage new and sustainable ways for businesses in the digital sector to generate value from their innovations and to find ways for other sectors to embrace and adopt internet-enabled opportunities".

**Author**
Brian Tinham

The Times, times2, 7 December 2012

## The Queen could teach Mr Gove a lot about the value of culture

### Richard Morrison

I suppose we can't blame our politicians for being obsessed with the country's economic woes. But I wish that on Wednesday night, after angrily debating the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for most of the day, more of them had made their way a few miles east to the Barbican concert hall.

For a start, after all that gloom and doom a sumptuous performance of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* might have cheered them up. (My review is on page 10 of T2, if you want the musical nitty-gritty.) But they would also have seen the Queen do something so heartwarming that surely even the ranks of philistines (otherwise known as her Government) could scarce forbear to cheer. She awarded her Medal for Music to the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain — the first time in the eight years of the medal's history that it has gone to an organisation rather than an individual.

I particularly wish that Michael Gove had been there, because the Queen seems to have a much better idea about educational values than our Education Secretary. Of course the NYO is a magnificent ensemble. Everyone in the media world raves about Venezuela's Simón Bolívar Orchestra. But the NYO (a true teenage orchestra, not a bunch of globetrotting twentysomethings) produces music making every bit as thrilling, and has been doing so since 1948. A big percentage of the British musicians who now represent us on the world stage — as soloists, conductors or in orchestras such as the Hallé and LSO — came up through its ranks. It's absurd that the NYO has never toured abroad and a scandal that it wasn't asked to play at the opening or closing ceremonies of the Olympics. It would be a great ambassador for British youth. The same goes for the superb National Youth Choir, which has had a tough year for sad, non-musical reasons, but now has a fine, young, music director, Ben Parry, to take it forward.

But the national youth ensembles (which also include brass and jazz bands) are important not just for their own standards. They also represent, par excellence, the ideal of a broad-based liberal education in which all children are given the opportunity, teachers and necessary equipment to push their talents as far as they will go in a range of areas, some narrowly academic, others, such as music, sport, art, dance and design, vital to the development of the well-balanced, rounded individual.

I cringe as I write those words, since I would hate to lecture cultured *Times* readers on the bleedin' obvious. But sadly Mr Gove, though a former *Times* journalist, seems to need the lecture. Despite a huge wave of opposition, including letters to this newspaper from some of the most successful performers, artists, designers and industrialists Britain has produced, he seems determined to press on with his restrictive EBacc plan to marginalise, at best, the arts in the school curriculum.

He is a smart guy and he likes music (or at least he used to play the tuba). So I wonder who's bending his ear when everyone else thinks he's making as much sense as a runaway bagpipe in a spin dryer. He's certainly impervious to argument. Questioned by MPs the other day, he simply refused to engage seriously with the EBacc debate, and resorted to praising Darren Henley's report on music education — and himself, for commissioning it.

Yes, Henley's report is excellent. But it chiefly concerns how children make music after school or at weekends, not how (or if) music and the other arts are taught in the regular curriculum. It's a little like having the icing but no cake — except that there's precious little icing either. Although the Government has adopted Henley's plans for regional "hubs" to run youth ensembles, it has cut music funding and hugely reduced staffing at the Arts Council, which is supposed to run the scheme.

But this isn't about money. Nor is what's happening at Newcastle Council and all those other local authorities using the excuse of the recession to turn off all subsidy to culture. It's much more about core values. Far too many people who are now at the top of politics, locally and nationally, simply see no reason why the arts should be supported at all. No, it's worse than that. Whether on the Left (as in Newcastle) or the Right (as in Gove) they seem to loathe arts types whom they rank only slightly above benefits cheats in the pantheon of "scroungers". Now they are getting their revenge.

Thank goodness that there are some at the top of British society who still see the value of culture. I notice that the Queen, in addition to giving her medal to the NYO, has just conferred the word Royal on the Central School of Speech & Drama. I really hope the Education Secretary will look and learn. I don't suppose for a moment that he will.

### 1 UP
### Royal baby

On Monday afternoon, the joyous news broke to an eagerly waiting nation: the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were to become parents. An heir to the throne had been conceived. Yes — Pippa Middleton's bum was finally going to be an aunt.

As a phalanx of celebrities scrambled to be the first to get on Twitter and congratulate the Cambridges (Olly Murs: "Cool #royalbaby that's amazing"), Britain basked in the comforting knowledge that our latest "face of the stamps and the money" was on its way.

Of course, a new heir to the throne means different things to different people. As mentioned before, to the celebrities on Twitter it was a small race to get their message in first. While Barack Obama tweeted a statesman-like, "We extend our congratulations to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on the welcome news out of London that they are having their first child," model Chrissy Teigen weighed in with "AWWWW Duchess Kate AWWWWWW SERIOUS AWWWW I'm not joking I'm seriously happy ew wtf," a message that gave the impression of having been typed while falling out of a plane or perhaps taking part in a roller-disco.

Lord Sugar, meanwhile, tweeted: "Congratulations, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are very pleased to announce that they are expecting a baby," an odd tone, which made him sound as if he'd just declared himself the Royal Baby Announcer, and would in time be tweeting further updates as to Middleton's morning sickness, Camilla's joy and William's difficulty in fitting the baby seat in the car ("His Highness says that he's been trying for an hour, but there is a weird spongy bit on the actual seat that stops it fitting properly, yeah, and that the object is a bastard, and that he is going for a fag and to calm down a bit and can't she just hold the baby — or is that illegal now?") For those prone to lachrymosity, meanwhile, it was a reminder of just what a uniquely difficult and contradictory job it is to become a royal parent.

Diana, for instance, is constantly cited as having been a brilliant mother to William and Harry because she took them to McDonald's, when every other mother in Britain feels they are being a bad parent for doing exactly the same thing. Confusing.

CW wishes the couple enormous luck. CW also wants to send a message to the Duchess. Dude. This sickness thing. When it gets better, pretend it hasn't and you can bunk off a solid six months of posy-holding, banquet small talk, school orchestras playing *Yellow Bird* on some kettle drums, and factory tours of Belgium. CW's been working a similar scam with its claims of recurrent cystitis for years.

### Is London the new New York?

David Cameron seems to be making less noise about saving the planet these days. But at least he and Boris Johnson dropped in on London's frightfully hip Hoxton Square yesterday for the Urban Age Electric City conference. Run by Deutsche Bank and the London School of Economics, it's a two-day talking shop for 300 green-minded scientists, politicians and architects, with an array of speakers that includes former mayors from Washington DC, Bogotá and Stockholm, and the biggest housebuilder in China.

I would be surprised if they change the world in two days. But some of the research emerging from the conference is certainly gripping — particularly about the host city. Take cycling. There are now two and a half times as many cyclists in London as there were ten years ago, crushed into the same bike-unfriendly roads as lorries. Half a million cycle trips are made in the capital every day. We have some way to go before we match cities such as Berlin, where 13 per cent of all journeys are done by bike. In London it's 2 per cent. Yet the number of cyclists killed in road accidents in the capital is still tragically high — 13 this year. What a pity that George Osborne didn't speed up the building of more designated cycle lanes as one of his big new infrastructure projects.

The other striking statistic is that although London has nothing like as many 60-storey skyscrapers as New York does, the number of workers per square km in Central London is now almost as high (140,000) as in midtown Manhattan (150,000). The knock-on effects of this dense mass of humanity on London's transport systems won't need spelling out to anyone who travels through Oxford Circus or Bank Tube stations at rush hour (or at any other time, for that matter). But of course these figures only confirm what workers in London have known instinctively all their lives. Tinned sardines have a lot more space.

THE ▓▓▓ TIMES

The Queen could teach Mr Gove a
lot about culture
**Richard Morrison**

# Arts

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The Telegraph, 7 December 2012
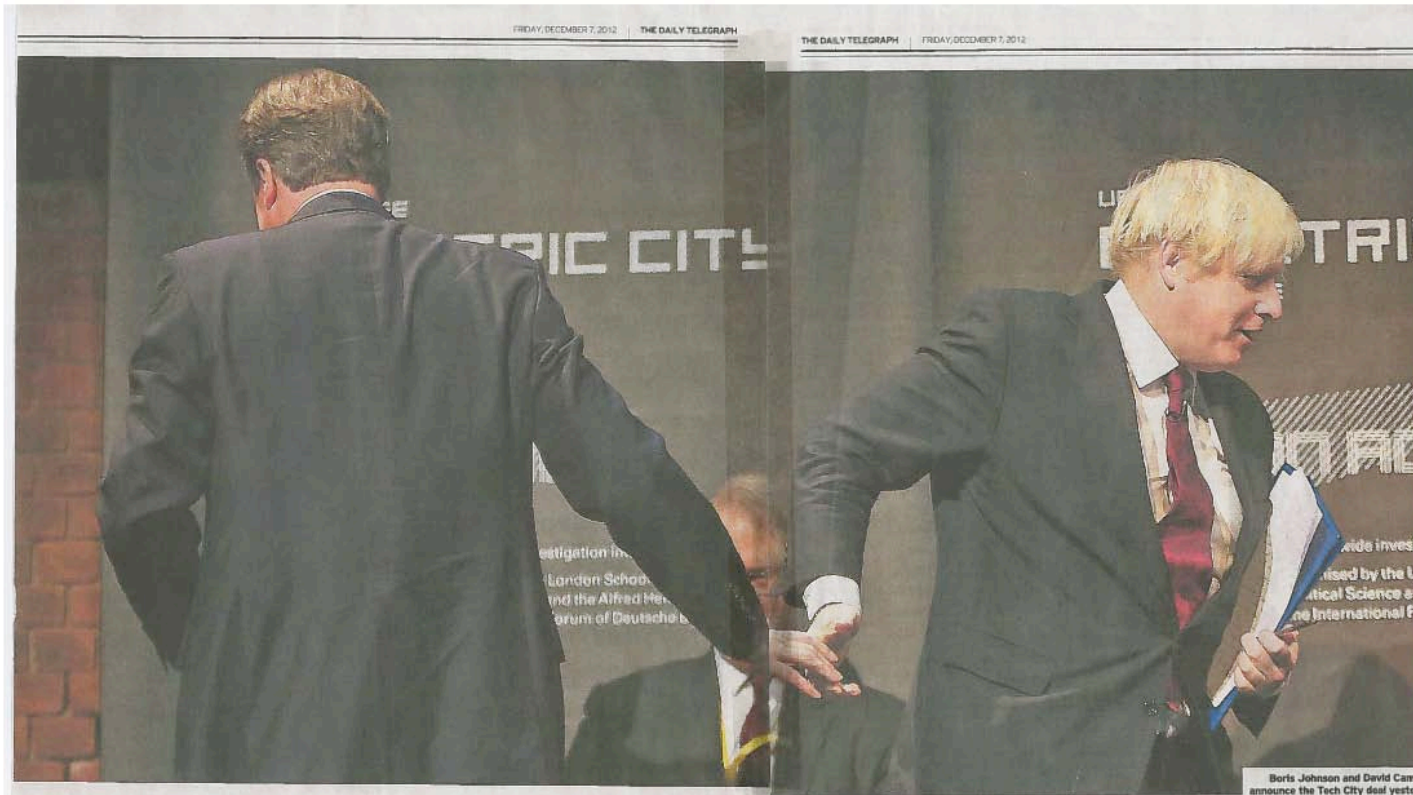
Boris Johnson and David Cameron announce the Tech City deal yesterday

## Tech City New deal to help start-up businesses

David Cameron pledged £50million to turn a London roundabout into Europe's largest indoor civic space for start-up businesses.

The new building, on the Old Street Roundabout in east London, will help students to develop their programming and business skills and will have a 400-seater auditorium with boardrooms, labs and workspaces.

The Prime Minister announced the funding for Tech City alongside Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, who said the centre would support about 200 start-ups each year and help create thousands of jobs.

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Health and Wellbeing

# The world's top five healthiest cities?

Tim Smedley shares his list of the top five healthiest cities using research, indices and health and wellbeing lists. Do you agree with his conclusions?

**Tim Smedley**
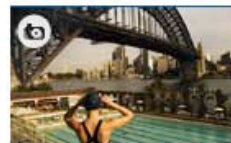Guardian Professional, Friday 7 December 2012 11.13 GMT

Jump to comments (3)



A couple relaxes in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens. The Australian metropolis is at number five in our healthiest cities list. Photograph: Steve Back/Destination NSW

Have you ever wondered about the best cities in the world for health and wellbeing? Well, we thought we'd get the ball rolling by compiling a top five – read all about them below, and see what the cities are really like in our gallery. If you want to boast about your own city's benefits, decry our choices or make your own alternative nominations, then get involved in the comments section below.

## 1. Hong Kong

Hong Kong tops virtually any healthy cities index. It has one of the highest population densities of any city in the world combined with one of the wealthiest: gross national income per capita is $45,090 (£28,115). With every square foot of real estate at a premium, people tend to stay out of the home to socialise; local restaurants become neighbourhood living rooms. According to LSE Cities, nearly 45% of all trips in Hong Kong are made on foot. All of which lends itself to a very healthy lifestyle. Its life expectancy, at 82.5, is one of the world's highest; its infant mortality rate, one of the lowest. It also has a high number of registered doctors – 12,818 to be precise, at the end of 2011, which is a ratio of 1:554 of the population. Given the city's density, that probably means most people live in the same building as one.

World's healthiest cities - gallery
Every city in the world will claim to have the best facilities for this or for that, but who really are the top cities for health and wellbeing? We put together a top 5 list based on various sustainability and wellbeing measures - and there may be some surprising results.
4 comments

What makes Bristol the UK's green capital? Alistair Sawday reflects on why Bristol is a magnet for green businesses and green people
15 comments

How can cities be designed for sustainable living? Gallery: we'd like to hear your thoughts on how cities can be designed for sustainable living and what you think urban

## 2. Tokyo

Tokyo remains the world's biggest city with a greater metropolitan population of some 35 million and – as with Hong Kong – one of the wealthiest, producing a GDP of $1,479bn (£922.3bn). Having arguably the world's best public transport systems leads to healthier lifestyles and (relatively) lower Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GGE). According to the London School of Economics professor Ricky Burdett: "The average commute in Tokyo takes one hour, whereas Sao Paulo and Mexico City, which are smaller populations but enormous cities, have average commuting times of four hours." Japan's life expectancy remains the highest in the world – 85.9 years for women and 79.4 years for men – perhaps helped in part by the fact that the number of murders in Tokyo is very low by global urban standards: 7.7 per million people in 2010.

## 3. Copenhagen

Western Europe's major cities all fair well in health and wellbeing listings, consistently outperforming any city in North or South America. However, Scandinavia remains the health and wellbeing capital of Europe. Denmark topped Gallup's Global Wellbeing Index, and Copenhagen is the jewel in its crown. One of the reasons behind its success is that it has achieved something very few cities of more than a million inhabitants have: it has replaced a driving culture with a cycling and walking culture. According to a study by the University of the West of England, pedestrian activity accounts for 80% of all traffic in Copenhagen city centre. Car use for commuting in Copenhagen fell from 42% in 1996 to only 26% in 2004; in contrast, commuting by bicycle accounts for 36% of all work trips. This means that you can take a lungful of air in central Copenhagen without fear: per capita carbon emissions from transport have declined by 9% between 1991 and 2011.

## 4. Stockholm

Sweden came fourth in Gallup's Global Wellbeing Index, and Stockholm joint sixth in Mercer's 2011 global city rankings for personal safety. An increasingly wealthy city, its Gross Value Added per capita has grown by 41% from 1993 to 2010. It is also green – the world's first national urban park is Stockholm's Royal National City Park, which remains an urban lung stretching for six miles within the city. Per capita GGE decreased by a whopping 31% from 1993 to 2010. And Stockholm also scores highly for mental stimulus, with one of the highest concentrations of museums in the world – there are more than 100.

## 5. Sydney

Large Asian cities such as Osaka and Singapore could feel rightly aggrieved for not appearing on this list, while this Australian metropolis does – Sydney's sprawling suburbs and car-based culture hardly seem the epitome of the healthy city. However Sydney tops the LSE's Metropolitan Wellbeing index for its quality of education – a major wellbeing factor – whilst also coming in the top 10 for health and the top 20 for wealth. It is also the embodiment of a healthy outdoor culture that many cities want to be (see San Francisco and New York) but few actually manage, with a high level of sports clubs and facilities (many the legacy of the Sydney Olympics), parks and beaches, not to mention good weather virtually all year round. Far from resting on its sandy laurels, Sydney is still working at it – 20,000 new street trees are to be planted to increase urban canopy by 50% by 2030, an investment in bicycle infrastructure has seen bike trips triple in peak periods and a retro-fitting programme of City buildings has seen GGE reduce by 18%, with a plan to hit 70% over the next 20 years.

The INDEPENDENT

*DEYAN SUDJIC*

Friday 7 December 2012

# Oscar Niemeyer had the vision our leaders lack

The Head of the Design Museum surveys the long and inspired career of the great architect, who died this week at 104, and find reasons to be immensely thankful

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Oscar Niemeyer, who died this week at the remarkable age of 104, was the last survivor of the heroic age of modern architecture. To the end of his life, he remained a firm believer in the power of contemporary architecture and design to make the world a better place.

It is an idea, as it applies to the former at least, that has been out of favour somewhat in Britain, ever since the Prince of Wales was tasteless enough to compare the efforts of Britain's architects to remodel contemporary London to those of the Luftwaffe to do the same job during the Second World War.

Niemeyer's greatest achievement was to use architecture to give Brazil a new identity as a dynamic modern state, rather than a picturesque former colonial backwater. Of course, as an architect, he could not have done that on his own. What gave Niemeyer his chance was a sophisticated political understanding in Brazil of what design could do for the country.

## Survivor

The result was Brasilia, for which Niemeyer designed all the major buildings; from the parliament to the foreign ministry. This capital, built with breakneck speed and bold, focused investment because President Kubitschek knew that he was not going to get more than a single term in power, survived a dictatorship as well as decades of mismanagement, to become an enduring and powerful symbol of Brazil as an emerging economic superpower.

It was a lesson in the political uses of design and architecture that I found myself remembering on Thursday morning when I heard of Niemeyer's death. I was in a converted former power station in Hoxton to hear the Prime Minister and the Mayor of London open the LSE's Urban Age conference on the future of the city by announcing a £50m investment by the Government to build Tech City on the site of Silicon Roundabout, east London's answer to Silicon Valley. The idea is to give the area both a practical and a symbolic boost.

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In physical terms, Tech City will offer places for a generation of software designers, who currently do most of their business nursing undertaxed coffee at Starbucks, somewhere to set up a less precarious base, somewhere to test prototypes, to get advice and to meet each other. Importantly, Tech City will also be a symbol of the significance of the area, and a reflection of how the messy vitality of a city that is nothing like Brasilia can continually reinvent itself, and provide the raw material for innovation.

Hoxton, on the fringe of the City's financial centre, was once the place where small workshops served the furniture-making and printing industries. They have gone, but the latter was probably what laid the foundations for the area's current reincarnation as the home of scores of start-up businesses. Print went digital early, and it was also closely associated with design and the creative industries. When hot metal died, Hoxton was left with plenty of empty warehouse space that was once, but is no longer, cheap. The vacuum has been filled by the creative industries, who flourish by working closely with each other, and who like to have a good time when they are not working. It accounts for Hoxton's mix of studios, galleries and bars.

Governments can't build another Apple, but they can create the conditions in which innovative companies will flourish. Building a symbolic heart for Silicon Roundabout will help. But it is not just symbolism that has made London a creative centre for the world. Its reputation is based on substance – in particular, on a system of education both in the schools and in what used to be known as art colleges. And for innovation to become useful, and profitable, we need more than technology, and that is where design comes in.

Every government minister, from David Cameron to Vince Cable, by way of George Osborne, is ready to embrace the economic benefits of what they sloganise as "designed in Britain and made in Britain". But their policies on design education, from diluting its presence on the school curriculum, to removing funding for such vital places as the Royal College of Art, and discouraging international students, will undermine Britain's leadership in the field.

## Investing in the future

Boris Johnson, who knows how to work a room, asked the audience at the Urban Age where Apple's chief designer was born. Jonathan Ive, of course, comes from Romford, and studied design in Newcastle. What Johnson did not mention was that Ive's father taught design and technology – a subject that is in danger of slipping off the national curriculum.

At the time that Niemeyer was building Brasilia, the country's economy was based on minerals and agriculture. It now has a successful aerospace industry, and is busy using design to move its products up the value chain, from generic commodities to premium products. This is the year that Fiat's Brazilian factories launched their first car designed and built entirely in Brazil. The country is well aware of the value of design, and is investing in design education and in promoting its own designers.

Britain's competitors are doing the same, from Hong Kong and Seoul, which are building their own design museums, to India, Turkey, Singapore and Taiwan, which are all taking design with the utmost seriousness.

Tech City is a welcome initiative. But if we want to secure London's position as a serious centre for technology and innovation, we must also invest in an education system that nurtures the skills on which it depends. For politicians to make effective use of investment in design, they need to offer more than symbolism. Content is needed, too.

*Dejan Sudjic is Director of the Design Musem* ■

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London Mayor Boris Johnson speaks at the The Electric City Conference in London. PRESS ASSOCIATION Photo. Picture date: Thursday December 6, 2012. David Cameron and Boris Johnson have unveiled plans to transform Tech City in east London. The Old Street roundabout is to be given a £50 million makeover to become a centre for technology start-ups and entrepreneurs. See PA story POLITICS TechCity. Photo credit should read: Peter Macdiarmid/PA Wire

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# Downing Street releases £50m for Silicon Roundabout proposal

7 December 2012 | By Elizabeth Hopkirk

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**Money signals green light for Architecture 00:/'s Tech City plans**

Architecture 00:/'s proposal for a new technical and creative institute at Old Street's "Silicon Roundabout" will become reality after the government announced £50 million of funding.

David Cameron announced the invesment at the LSE's Electric City conference in Shoreditch this morning, saying it would foser the next generation of digital entrepreneurs.

Architecture 00:/'s Tech City

The proposals by YAYA finalist 00:/, which also have the backing of the Mayor of London, include a new civic space owned and operated in the community interest providing workshop and exhibition spaces, free workspaces, education and innovation accelerators.

It will also feature public realm improvements to the Tech City area, including proposals to create a pedestrian peninsular, and safer cycle routes.

A feasibility study to find a location is already underway and is expected to be complete in the New Year.

"What has really been announced today is the support for the proposition of the civic institution as a response to the institutional 'thinness' of east London, considering this exploding cluster of young startups in the area: an investment into cultural and economic infrastructure," said 00:/'s Alastair Parvin.

"The proposition aims to follow in the footsteps of London's great civic institutions, such as the British Library, the Royal Institution, the Tate: building a national commons for young inventors and creatives, which is accessible to all of us."

Cameron said: "The UK is in a global race and I am determined that we as a Government continue doing everything we can to equip the UK to compete and thrive in that race.

"That's why we're investing in creating the largest civic space in Europe – a place for start-up companies and the local community to come together and become the next generation of entrepreneurs."

## National Times

# Too smart for our own good

December 7, 2012                                         ☆ Read later

**Opinion**

Richard Sennett

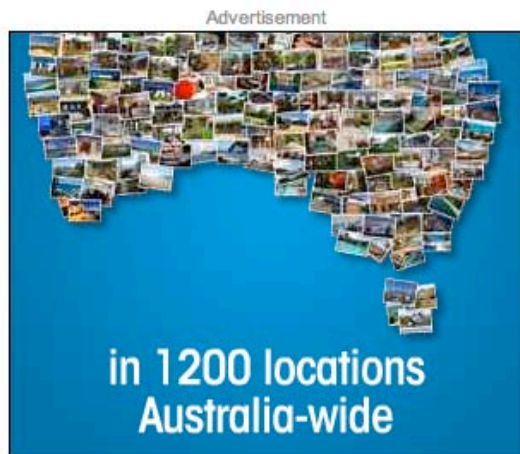## The urbanists' dream of an ultra-efficient and meticulously planned city could prove to be a nightmare.

The Songdo international business district, 65km west of Seoul in South Korea.

This week London hosts a jamboree of computer geeks, politicians and urban planners from around the world.

At the Urban Age conference, they will discuss the latest whiz idea in high-tech, the "smart city". Doing more than programming traffic, the smart city's computers will calculate where offices and shops can be laid out most efficiently, where people should sleep and how all the parts of urban life should be fitted together.

Science fiction? Smart cities are being built in the Middle East and in South Korea; they have become a model for developers in China and for redevelopment in Europe. Thanks to the digital revolution, at last life in cities can be brought under control. But is this a good thing?

You don't have to be a romantic to doubt it. In the 1930s the American urbanist Lewis Mumford foresaw the disaster entailed by "scientific planning" of transport, embodied in the super-efficient highway, choking the city. The Swiss architecture critic Sigfried Giedion worried that after World War II efficient building technologies would produce a soulless landscape of glass, steel, and concrete boxes. Yesterday's smart city, today's nightmare.

The debate about good engineering has changed now because digital technology has shifted the technological focus to information processing; this can occur in hand-held computers linked to "clouds" or in command centres. The danger now is that this information-rich city may do nothing to help people think for themselves or communicate well with one another.

Imagine you are a master planner facing a blank computer screen and that you can design a city from scratch, free to incorporate every bit of high technology into your design. You might come up with Masdar in the United Arab Emirates or Songdo in South Korea.

These are two versions of the stupefying smart city: Masdar the more famous, or infamous; Songdo the more fascinating in a perverse way. Masdar is a half-built city rising out of the desert, whose planning - overseen by the master architect Norman Foster - comprehensively lays out the activities of the city, the technology monitoring and regulating the function from a central command centre. The city is conceived in "Fordist" terms - that is, each activity has an appropriate place and time.

Urbanites become consumers of choices laid out for them by prior calculations of where to shop, or to get a doctor, most efficiently. There's no stimulation through trial and error; people learn their city passively. "User-friendly" in Masdar means choosing menu options rather than creating the menu. Creating your own new menu entails, as it were, being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In mid-20th-century Boston, for instance, its new "brain industries" developed in places where the planners never imagined they could grow. Masdar - like London's new "ideas quarter" around Old Street, east London - on the contrary assumes a clairvoyant sense of what should grow where. The smart city is over-zoned, defying the fact that real development in cities is often haphazard, or in between the cracks of what's allowed. Songdo represents the stupefying smart city in its architectural aspect - massive, clean, efficient housing blocks rising up in the shadow of South Korea's western mountains, like an inflated 1960s British housing estate - but now heat, security, parking and deliveries are all controlled by a central Songdo "brain". The massive units of housing are not conceived as structures with any individuality in themselves, nor is the ensemble of these faceless buildings meant to create a sense of place.

Uniform architecture need not inevitably produce a dead environment, if there is some flexibility on the ground. In New York, for instance, along parts of Third Avenue, monotonous residential towers are subdivided on street level into small, irregular shops and cafes; they give a good sense of neighbourhood. But in Songdo, lacking that principle of diversity within the block, there is nothing to be learnt from walking the streets.

A more intelligent attempt to create a smart city comes from work currently under way in Rio de Janeiro. Rio has a long history of devastating flash floods, made worse socially by widespread poverty and violent crime. In the past people survived thanks to the complex tissues of local life; the new information technologies are now helping them, in a very different way to Masdar and Songdo. Led by IBM, with help from Cisco and other subcontractors, the technologies have been applied to forecasting physical disasters, to co-ordinating responses to traffic crises and to organising police work on crime. The principle here is co-ordination rather than, as in Masdar and Songdo, prescription.

But isn't this comparison unfair? Wouldn't people in the favelas prefer, if they had a choice, the pre-organised, already planned place in which to live? After all, everything works in Songdo. A great deal of research during the past decade, in cities as different as Mumbai and Chicago, suggests that once basic services are in place people don't value efficiency above all; they want quality of life. A hand-held GPS device won't, for instance, provide a sense of community.

What's more, the prospect of an orderly city has not been a lure for voluntary migration, neither to European cities in the past nor today to the sprawling cities of South America and Asia. If they have a choice, people want a more open, indeterminate city in which to make their way; this is how they can come to take ownership over their lives.

There's nothing wicked about the smart city confab London is hosting this week. Technology is a great tool, when it's used responsively, as in Rio. But a city is not a machine. As in Masdar and Songdo, this version of the city can deaden and stupefy the people who live in its all-efficient embrace. We want cities that work well enough but are open to the shifts, uncertainties and mess that are real life.

**Guardian**

**Richard Sennett is a professor of sociology at the London School of Economics.**

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## Old Street 'Silicon Roundabout' set for £50m regeneration project – with more corporate investment to follow

December 7, 2012 |    Posted by: Sarah Howell |    Filed under: Business, Employment, Lead Stories, Local News



Plans for Old Street Roundabout. Pic: 00:/

David Cameron and Boris Johnson have announced plans to transform 'Silicon Roundabout' into "Europe's largest indoor civic space".

The government will invest £50m in a regeneration project that aims to transform the centre of Old Street Roundabout into a hub dedicated to startups and entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the Urban Age Electric City Conference in Shoreditch yesterday, Cameron said: "This amazing new space will provide entrepreneurs and startup businesses with the facilities and the spaces they need to succeed but which, individually, they might not be able to afford themselves."

Designed by architects 00:/, in collaboration with Hackney and Islington councils, the new building will house classrooms, auditoriums, flexible office space and a 3D printing lab, as well as exhibition spaces and workshop zones.

Designers' plans for the area say: "The paradox of 'Silicon Roundabout' is that it is simultaneously the centre-piece of the tech enterprise story in east London, but at the same time a conspicuous and embarrassing void.

"[The hub] aims to do for Tech what the Barbican Centre and the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern have done for the arts. This would include tech expos, live events, public talks and cultural pop-ups."

Matthew Evans, co-director of Hoxton Mix, a creative space provider in Shoreditch, welcomes the development.

He told Eastlondonlines: "At the moment, the billboard on the roundabout is one of the highest-grossing billboards in the UK, but the revenue from it isn't going into Tech City.

"If the plans are the same as those we have seen, then I think it will definitely benefit the area."

The announcement of the multi-million pound project was accompanied by news that seven large international firms are committing to Tech City, including Microsoft, KPMG and IBM.

Boris Johnson said: "The time is right to lay solid foundations in Tech City for London's digital revolution, and this list of major new firms committing to the area is a testament to the confidence leading tech entrepreneurs have in the capital."

Emphasising their plans to connect with Shoreditch's startup community, a Microsoft spokesperson told Eastlondonlines: "Our plans are to reach over 5,000 startups, students, designers and artists each year through innovation days, peer-to-peer advice and development support."

"We will also create packages of support for developer apprentices and are working on a new apprenticeship [programme] to support young people in and around Tech City."

Other investing companies are also planning to develop links with young people. Barclays and Ravensbourne have announced a new creative partnership that will see students taught about technology and design as well as provided with placement opportunities at the company. University College London, partnered with Cisco and and DC Thompson, are opening IDEA London, an online academy focusing on career training and development.

Dubbing the redevelopment the "Silicon Roundabout Hub", Boris Johnson said: "It will provide not only a vital resource to nurture upcoming technology and creative superstars from around the world, it will drive huge investment into the capital and help create thousands of jobs."

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# £50 million fund for technical and creative institute at Old Street's Silicon Roundabout is launched

Prime Minister David Cameron and Mayor of London Boris Johnson have unveiled plans to establish a £50 million 'technical and creative institute' around the area dubbed 'the Silicon Roundabout' at Old Street in London. | 07 Dec 2012

**Topics** ⟩ Planning

Chancellor George Osborne confirmed the funding in Wednesday's Autumn Statement. Cameron committed himself to developing the area also known as Tech City two years ago.

The plans, set out yesterday at a conference organised by LSE Cities, propose an architecture-designed scheme housing 200 start-up companies a year, and hosting two annual conferences for companies from the technology sector and creative industries. Potential locations for the institute are being assessed in a feasibility study which will be completed in the New Year.

The Greater London Authority will have responsibility for delivering the project, which has already been backed by several companies including KPMG, IBM and Microsoft.

"The UK is in a global race and I am determined that we as a Government continue doing everything we can to equip the UK to compete and thrive in that race", said the Prime Minister. "That's why we're investing in creating the largest civic space in Europe – a place for start-up companies and the local community to come together and become the next generation of entrepreneurs."

The institute will also host a mentoring network for entrepreneurs, help 1,000 young people each year find skilled employment, support initiatives which make recruitment easier such as providing support around Visa applications for overseas workers, engage up to 50,000 school children with enterprise programmes, support the growth of Digital Shoreditch Festival to an audience of 200,000, and lead 10 overseas trade delegations with UKTI and the Mayor's promotional agency London & Partners.

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# Rohan Silva: Britain needs tech support – and here's the man to provide it

Rohan Silva wants all of us to be able to create our own websites. He tells Ian Burrell how he's going to help
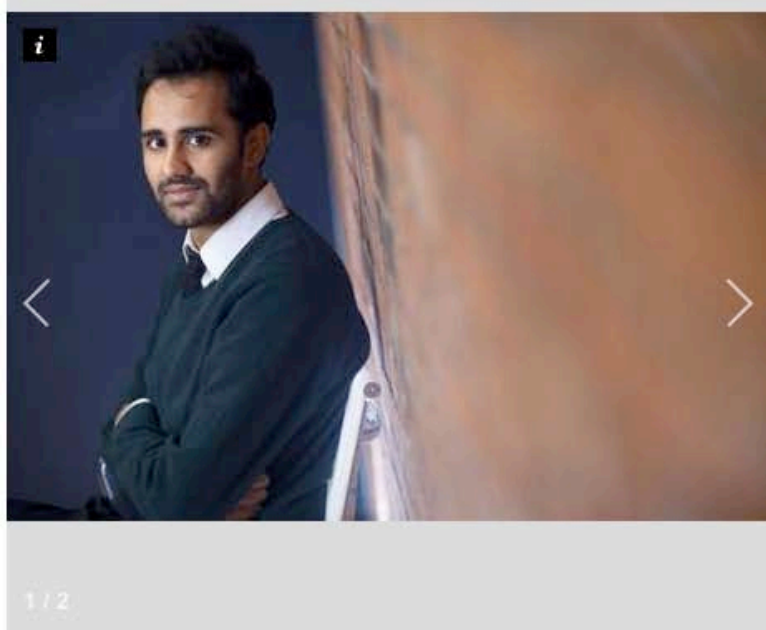
**IAN BURRELL** ➕ | MONDAY 10 DECEMBER 2012

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1 / 2

Rohan Silva might be only 31, but he already has the ear of David Cameron and George Osborne. In the ornate and old-world surroundings of the Chancellor's Dining Room in Downing Street, the technology expert sets out his bold plans for turning the UK into a nation of computer programmers.

Mr Silva is looking for a British Sergey Brin or Mark Zuckerberg, who can build a business of the scale of Google or Facebook in the land of Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the internet. But he also wants as many of us as possible to play a part in putting Britain at the forefront of the international technology race.

## Cameron's after lunch slip

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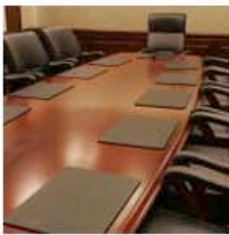
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In 2013, Mr Silva, a senior policy adviser to the Prime Minister, will oversee a government push to "get behind coding generally". He is not describing a curriculum change but a national movement to help the public set up its own websites. "This is not just in schools and not just in universities but for people everywhere. We are going to be launching a big new initiative on this that pulls together all these amazing programmes," he says, referencing computer coding initiatives. "That's going to be a big thing for next year."

It is Mr Silva who invariably escorts Mr Cameron and ministers such as David Willetts and Michael Gove to the East End backstreets when they want to be seen showing interest in technology start-ups. This is the neighbourhood that the Government – at Mr Silva's suggestion – has championed as "Tech City", a beacon of British innovation.

To mark Tech City's second birthday last week, Mr Cameron announced a £50m initiative to regenerate the neighbourhood. A grubby traffic junction at Old Street will be transformed by a "civic space", where tech entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and artists will intermingle.

Mr Silva says the name Tech City was chosen to denote "global ambition". The new building programme is intended to counteract the disappointment some would-be foreign investors have felt on arriving at the gloomy gyratory system. "We have actually lost a few companies to the UK who have visited Old Street roundabout itself and said this was not what they had in mind," he says.

Even so, the initiative has produced remarkable results. An unaffiliated collection of 200 companies has grown into a thriving community of more than 1,200 businesses which has won international fame. This was not the case when Mr Silva was first given his mission by Mr Cameron, after returning from a visit to India. "The Prime Minister's advice was, 'Get on a plane, go out to Silicon Valley and do some deals'." Mr Silva, who left university to work as a "fast stream" policy analyst at the Treasury before becoming an economic adviser to Mr Osborne when he was in opposition, secured a meeting with Eric Schmidt, only to hear that the then chief executive of Google had no inkling of the technology cluster. Since then, the world leader in search technology has established a seven-storey "Google Campus" near Silicon Roundabout, in which British start-ups are offered desk space and mentoring.

The latest investment announcement included news that Microsoft, IBM and accountants KPMG are moving into Tech City. Imperial College and University College London are on board to supply science graduates to this digital ecosystem. Despite Mr Silva's confident sales pitch, not everyone is convinced by the project. Public investment and government hype for the capital city is regarded with cynicism by some working in Britain's other tech hubs, such as Cambridge, Manchester, Bristol and Dundee. Some see Tech City as largely a branding exercise, earning political capital for Mr Cameron while putting money into softer tech companies that invent clever media-friendly websites and apps but contribute relatively little to the economy. Mr Silva's argument is that the London digital cluster was vibrant before he became involved. It receives only £2m of public funding a year and its intimate relationship with Westminster politicians, he says, has helped companies all over the country by highlighting common problems and provoking government action in the shape of tax breaks and entrepreneur visas.

The geographical competition he is focused on is between the UK and other nations of Europe. After years trying to get the population online, the Government wants to go to another level and encourage more of us to be computer literate.

That is Mr Silva's vision. "What Tech City is really about at big-picture level is saying, where is it we want this country to be in the next 10 years. And that means looking at the role of universities and the tax system but it also means looking at the skills that all of us will need to have if we are going to be truly competitive in this global race, as the Prime Minister puts it," he says. "You see Paris, Berlin and Stockholm racing to catch up with London." He's not worried by Paris ("because of the attitude there, the hostility to entrepreneurship") but admits Berlin has "a huge structural advantage" in its supply of cheap office space.

But the imminent arrival of Joanna Shields as chief executive of the Tech City Investment Organisation has convinced him the "global race" can be won. Shields, born in America but a long-standing British resident, amassed two fortunes working in social media, at Bebo and then Facebook. "Joanna is best in class in working out what the next big thing is going to be," Mr Silva says. "And her view is that all the global tectonic plates are moving in London's direction. The next year or two is going to be all about the rest of the world and this is when Tech City really will go global."

# Hi-flyers: three firms fulfilling Silva's vision

### Songkick

Ian Hogarth and Pete Smith raised investment for the music concert service Songkick from Sequoia Capital, the Silicon Valley investment fund, and that prompted a lot of investors to take London even more seriously.

### Somethin' Else

It produces everything from interactive books to radio shows. It's saying creative content can't be pinned down to one medium.

### Mother

Digital marketing and social media are among Tech City's strengths, and Mother is an advertising agency that has been there from the beginning. It has regenerated an entire street and its top floors are home to start-ups.

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# Richard Sennett pours scorn on Tech City plans

11 December 2012 | By Elizabeth Hopkirk

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### Academic says scheme is death knell for Shoreditch

Richard Sennett has dismissed Architecture 00:/'s plans for a new technical and creative institute at Old Street's 'Silicon Roundabout'.

The day after prime minister David Cameron announced £50 million to green-light the scheme, the LSE professor poured scorn on the idea.

He said: "When the prime minister and mayor announced there will now be a dedicated space for creativity I thought, 'This area is now over'.

"The idea of building a place where we put all the tech people contravenes why that area grew up in the first place. The reason the area is a centre for innovation already is that most of the firms that are here weren't meant to be here. It was somewhere planners never expected them to go," he told the Urban Age: Electric City conference which was held yards from the Old Street roundabout last week.

Sennett likened the idea to Masdar, the zero-carbon city masterplanned by Foster & Partners in the Abu Dhabi desert, or Songdo in South Korea.

"These are two versions of the stupefying smart city," he said. "There is no stimulation through trial and error; people learn their city passively... The smart city is over-zoned, defying the fact that real development in cities is often haphazard, or in between the cracks of what is allowed."

Announcing the money, Cameron said: "The UK is in a global race and I am determined that we as a government continue doing everything we can to equip the UK to compete and thrive in that race.

"That's why we're investing in creating the largest civic space in Europe - a place for start-up companies and the local community to come together and become the next generation of entrepreneurs."

Alastair Parvin of 00:/ said it was an investment in cultural and economic infrastructure for east London. The plan is for a new civic space owned and operated in the community interest providing workshop and exhibition spaces, free workspaces, education and innovation accelerators.



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