• **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Utopian governance and the ‘smart’ city

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• **Abstract (300 words):**

The critique centred on the controlling of bodies through emerging forms of digital surveillance can be extended to the wider information networks of the ‘smart’ city. Definitions of ‘smart’ cities are reminiscent of idealized forms of utopian governance. These definitions encapsulate the controlled organization of people in physical and digital environments that are more ‘efficiently’ managed due to the use of information technologies. Pu Liu and Zhenghong Peng emphasize the holistic control of the ‘smart’ city when they write:

> Worldwide research is currently focusing on the wireless sensor network node technology, system miniaturization, intelligent wireless technology, communication and heterogeneous network, network planning and deployment, comprehensive perception and information processing, code resolution service, searching, tracking, and information distribution to make a smart city the extension of a smart space to the entire city scale (Albino et al 2015, 5).
In the informational age, the notion of a prescribed idealized utopian space thus shifts to the space of new technological environments and to the wider space of the ‘smart city’, where ‘the decentered self has been repositioned as the locus of techno institutional forces pushing and pulling to achieve maximal efficiencies’ (Dyson 1998, 39). Paradoxically, the desire for increasingly automated technologies restricts the virtual possibilities of the machine. Through the act of automation certain possibilities are actualized within a variable system, therefore automation is made possible by eliminating many other possibilities (Stiegler 1998). Automated technologies thus easily lend themselves to the instrumental use of technology as a human ‘will to master’. An overview of the technical object, as articulated by Bernard Stiegler, provides a grasp of the indeterminate virtual possibilities that the machine could offer. If the ‘smart’ city is a not-so-subtle veiled form of utopian control, then what are the means for disrupting and subverting the technologies deployed within these systems?

- Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr. George Themistokleous [BA, U Toronto/ MA; MArch U Brighton/ PhD Leeds Beckett U] is an architect, media artist and lecturer in History/ Theory and Arch Design (Year 1 Leader) at De Montfort University, and visiting lecturer at the University of the Arts Helsinki (Live Art and Performance Studies programme). He is the director of para-sight (www.para-sight.org) an interdisciplinary spatial practice. George’s research explores the changing role of the body via assemblages of older and emerging visual media, including custom-made devices and participatory multimedia installations. His design research has been published internationally in edited books, academic and design journals, and selected/exhibited in various platforms including the 2016 Acadia: Posthuman Frontiers, 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale, 2018 ACM Siggraph, 2019 Future Architecture Platform, and the 2019 Leonardo LABS database. He is the co-editor of This Thing Called Theory (Routledge).