

U20/G20 perspective: Digital transformation, new opportunities for cities?

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U20 2025 Webinar Concept Note:

"Digital Transformation and Innovation: Driving Inclusive Urban Innovation"

26 February 2025, 11:00am – 12:30pm SAST, MS Teams Platform

Cities & DT: Game-Changing

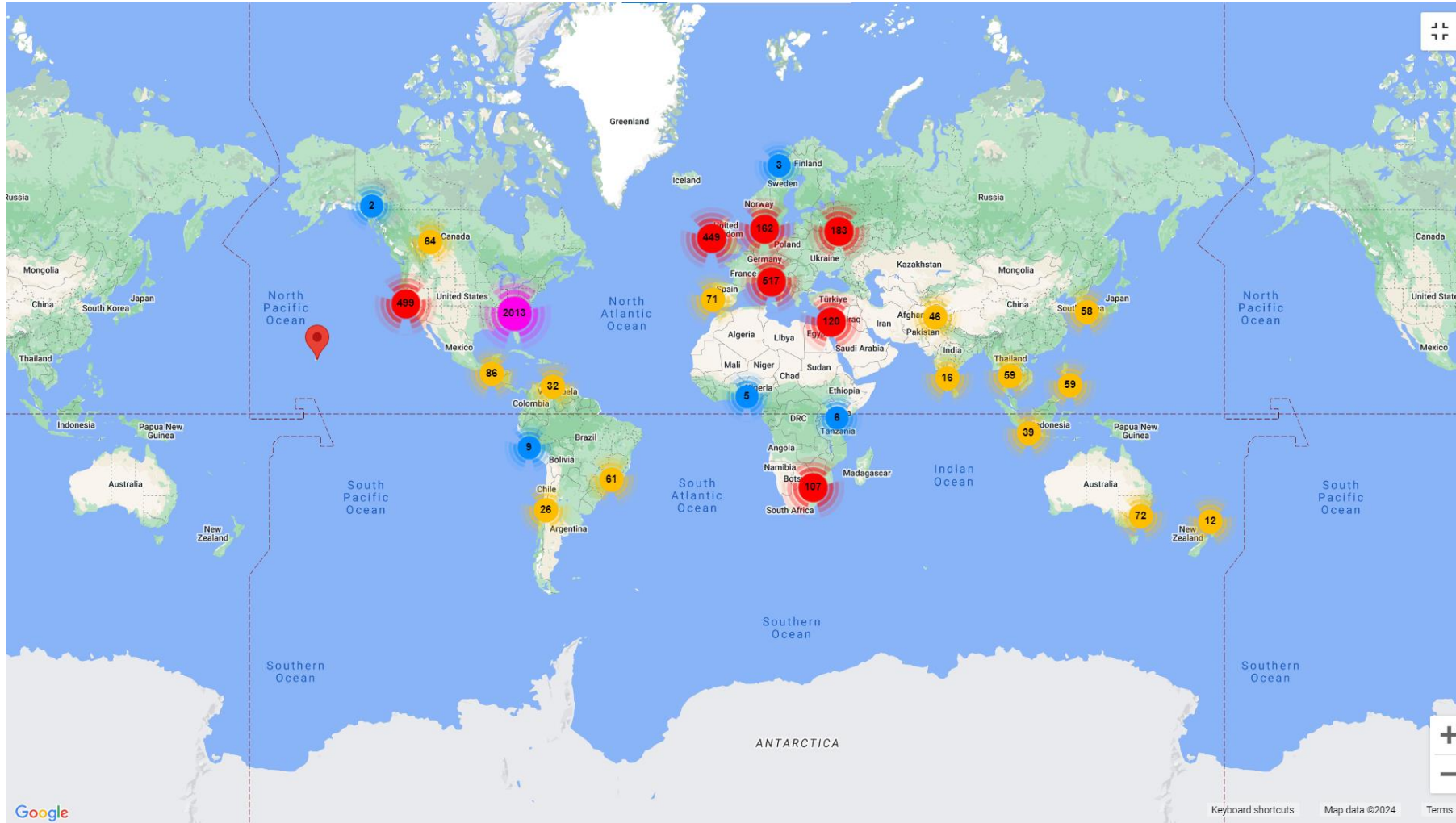
Old Game:	New Reality:	Shift Needed:
From standardized, siloed, bureaucratic public services	To digital tools enabling hyper-personalized, anticipatory services—but risk deepening exclusion if designed without equity	Move from efficiency-first digitization to human-centered design that prioritizes universal access
Citizens as passive recipients of state services	Digital tools enable citizens to co-create—but trust is fragile amid surveillance and disinformation risks	From government-to-citizen (G2C) to government-with-citizen (GwC) models, where digital tools are trust-building infrastructures
Governments regulate corporations and partner for infrastructure	Big Tech firms act as quasi-governments, shaping urban life via AI, cloud services, and IoT—often with more power than municipalities	From public-private partnerships (PPPs) to public-interest partnerships that subordinate corporate influence to democratic oversight
Centralized control, cities as administrative arms of the state	Cities are innovation labs driving climate action, digital inclusion, and crisis response, often outpacing national governments—yet, they lack fiscal autonomy and data rights	From deconcentration (limited delegation) to devolution (true subsidiarity), where cities govern their digital futures

DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

#1 Localize Digital Public Infrastructure as civic empowerment platforms

- Mandate **“Civic By Design” Standards for DPI** prioritising equity over efficiency
- Design and fund **municipal “digital commons”** to mitigate data colonialism, including regulatory shields e.g. against vendor lock-ins
- Institutionalize **local-national DPI co-governance**, including data pooling and joint standards oversight
- Dedicate 20% of a G20 DPI Global Initiative budget to **city-led innovation pilots**

Civic Tech around the world



#2 Scale community-driven innovation through civic tech platforms

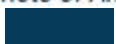
- **Fund inclusive digital tools** co-designed by local governments and communities in order to scale participatory Civic Tech platforms.
- Create **equitable financing mechanisms for local innovators**—de-risk investment in community-led urban innovation

Amsterdam: Leading the world in digital sovereignty and ethical AI

By [Paul Budde](#) | 14 August 2024, 8:00am | [1](#) comments | [🖨️](#)



Time lapse photo of Amsterdam during the night time (via PickPik)



Africa / Innovation

Nigerians are building affordable alternatives to AWS and Google Cloud

Local cloud startups offer data sovereignty at a time when the debate about who has access to a country's data is heating up.



Rest of World

By [DAMILARE DOSUNMU](#)

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[TRANSLATE](#) ▾

#3 Leverage non-aligned tech alliances

- Support a **global Civic Tech Commons** to develop and share open-source tools
- **Incentivize cities to adopt data sovereignty laws**, ensuring residents data isn't exploited by corporations or governments
- Create **platforms for knowledge sharing** between local governments, and **fund South-South innovation hubs**

**Siyabonga
Obrigada**

धन्यवाद

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谢谢

Merci

Спасибо



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