

SCHMOOGLE COMES TO LUMINOCITY

Through President Trump's 2019 Amazingly Tremendous Infrastructure Bill, a mid-sized American city, Luminocity, has secured \$100 million to implement "smart" infrastructure that will enable it to tackle a variety of persistent challenges -- from traffic congestion and crime, to immigration vetting and digital equity -- while also promoting sustainability, open governance, citizen education, and economic development, skills training, and job creation. Schmoogle, the tech-and-hamburger goliath that emerged when Google merged with Shake Shack in 2018, has also chosen Luminocity as a "test bed" for a new agile, adroit infrastructure: SapienSpore, an airborne colony of artificially intelligent microbots that will float throughout the city's buildings, airspaces, water sources, and urban denizens' bodies. The bots will collect information about traffic flows and feed it to the Department of Transit. They'll gather information about registered inhabitants' whereabouts (with special attention paid to "disruptive populations," e.g., truants, parolees, and the homeless). These benign (trust us: they've been rigorously tested!) agents will gather passive data about individuals' bodily functions and vital signs, and securely feed it to their doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and insurance agencies. They'll monitor air quality and noise pollution and other environmental variables, and transfer this information to the appropriate city agencies. Collectively, these intelligent agents will also serve as a ubiquitous telecommunications infrastructure, providing a blanket of public WiFi and serving as an ambient data repository. And because SapienSpore is built on open tech standards and accessible to developers through APIs, it'll provide a foundation for entrepreneurial activity. Just think of all the new apps! Finally, SapienSpore microbots have the ability to assemble into communication substrates -- screens, skywriting, floating interfaces in other forms -- allowing them to spontaneously manifest situational messages, including emergency notices, wayfinding information, or targeted advertising.

This afternoon, Luminocity is hosting a Town Hall meeting -- in our classroom, of all places! -- in which Schmoogle's local team and Mayor Clinton's tech + economic development offices will discuss the promises of this new smart infrastructure and solicit public feedback. Both parties are aware that Luminosians are curious about SapienSpore's business interests, so they're prepared to say a bit about what they stand to gain, financially, from the partnership. The civic tech community is stoked about SapienSpore's capacities as a platform for development, particularly its promise as a tool for citizen science, public education, and job creation. Yet they harbor some reservations. Even more suspicious are a few citizens' advocacy groups (you can determine their membership and mission), who are concerned about the risks of this new technology -- particularly in regard to privacy, security, resilience, and democracy.

Our task is to organize the class into four groups and to adopt the subjectivity of our assigned stakeholders:

1. the **local Schmoogle team** (and maybe the company's 15-year-old founder has decided to fly in for the occasion, just to add some gravitas to the presentation?);
2. representatives from the **Mayor's office's tech and economic development team**;

3. representatives from the **local civic tech community**, eager to hack shit;
4. and representatives from an apprehensive (or downright hostile) **citizens' advocacy group** (who maybe decided to bring along a friend from the ACLA or another watchdog organization?).

Each group will then have **15 minutes' prep** to develop a **five- to seven-minute Town Hall presentation**, in which each group member must participate. Each group will collectively present its position on the Schmoogle/city proposal (acknowledging both pro's and con's); discuss the rationale for its convictions; and, where possible, support its claims with references to expert sources (including, ideally, our class readings) and relevant data. You'll need to create at least one "**slide**" (analog or digital) that highlights the main items on your agenda and your key arguments (these slides will ultimately allow us to document our work).

After everyone presents, we'll then give the groups another **five minutes to develop rebuttals** to their opponents, then **five minutes each to share their retorts** with the larger group.

After these two rounds of presentations, we'll break out of our roles and examine how this exercise may have shed some light on our central questions for the day: "what *are* smart cities, and why are they often so dumb and scary?"