expanding digital opportunity?

inclusive innovation and the 'ordinary' city

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people & places in the 'digital economy'

**those who develop & apply tech**

and those that don't...

the meta-debate…

"Big data, new algorithms, and cloud computing will change the nature of work and the structure of the economy. But the exact nature of that change will be *determined by the social, political, and business choices we make*."

Kenney and Zysman (2016)

SO…

Will the 'digital economy' more deeply entrench 'digital divides' or - with **intentional intervention** - are more '*inclusive innovation*' pathways possible?
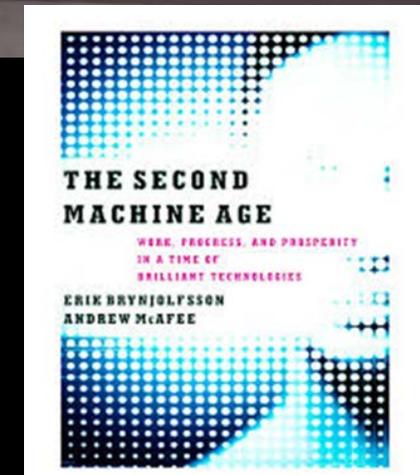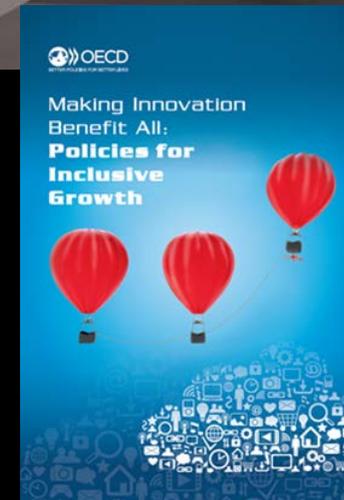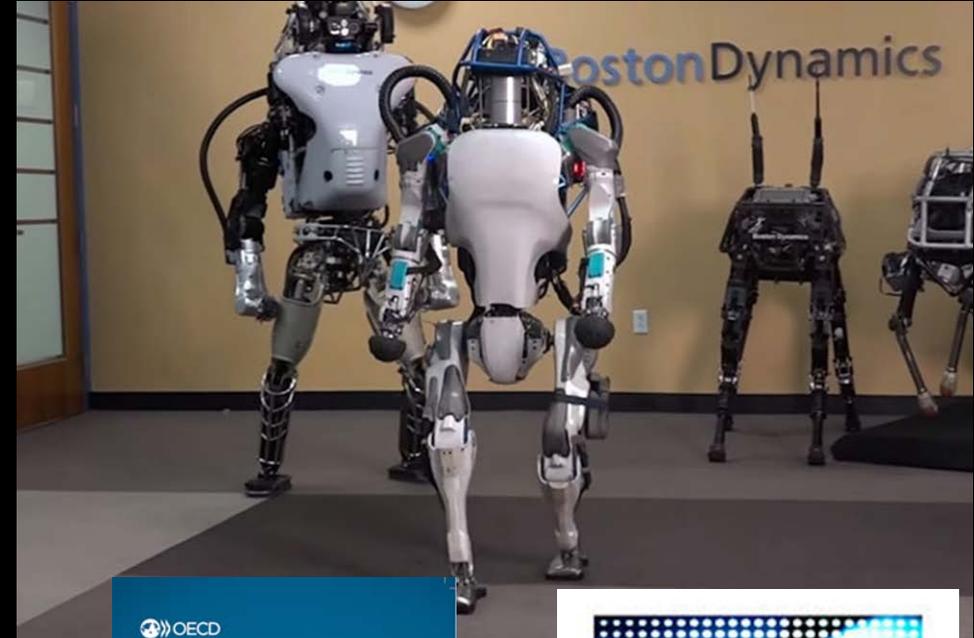
economic opportunity & the 'digital divide':
3 analytical entry points & 3 research questions

1. **spatial: 'digital' transformation in mid-sized cities** (Wolfe & Bramwell, 2008, 2016; Clarke & Gaile, 1998; Kodryzicki & Munoz, 2014; Erickcek & McKinney, 2006; Kotkin, 2003; Bell & Jayne, 2006; Markusen et al, 2008)

2. **socio-technical: digital inequality & work**
   - **skills & tech career pathways** (Lowe, 2008; Chapple, 2006; Giloth, 2004; OECD, 2017)
   - **entrepreneurship** (Porter, 1997; Kauffman, 2016, OECD, 2017)
   - **maker/hacker spaces (Vinodrai, CDO; Wolfe-Powers, 2016)**

3. **institutional: policy & local governance** (Bradford & Bramwell, 2014; Benner & Pastor, 2015; Savitch & Kantor, 2002; Rodriguez-Pose, 2013; Gertler, 2013; Harrison & Glasmeier, 1997)

1. **Creating digital opportunity?** (tech-based innovation or conventional attraction strategies?)

2. **Expanding digital opportunity? (development from within or attraction from elsewhere?)**

3. **Governing digital opportunity? (leverage policy & coordinate local efforts or fragmentation & competition?)**

institutions & 'inclusive innovation':
3 theoretical frames

resilience & regional innovation – *incidental inclusion*

PREDICT? networked & engaged business community leads transformation

collaborative governance & planning - *intentional inclusion*

PREDICT? inclusive planning shapes equitable outcomes

urban political economy & governance - *negotiated inclusion*

PREDICT? fragmented power; 'weak market' cities not progressive, 'eds & meds' default

research design

- **2 independent variables:** federal & state/provincial policies; local governance
- **2 dependent variables:** digital innovation (TBED); inclusion (skills & start-ups)

& methodology

- **6 case studies: 2 each in Canada, the US, & France**
- **control for size (250,000 – 500,000), location, economic specialization**
- **25-30 interviews in each case: public, post-secondary, non-profits & private**

2 archetypal 'ordinary' cities

Greensboro, NC, p. 280,000

London, ON, p. 380,000

"**pleasantly mediocre**"
(McKinsey, 2002); "**the wrong kind of social capital**" (Florida, 2002);
"**Greensboring**" (me)

"**ordinary city at a crossroads**" (Bradford, 2016);
"**white, right, and polite**"
(me & anyone else who grew up there…)

1. Creating Digital Opportunity?
tech-based economic transformation

GREENSBORO

nanotech…who knew?
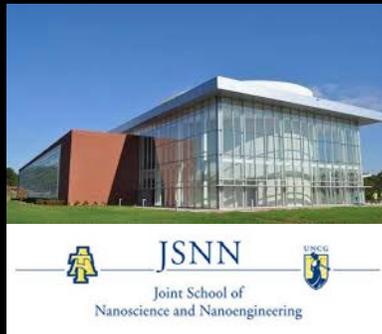
BUT

- R&D but no anchor firms
- few tech start-ups, weak networks
- ec dev collaborative but not innovation focused

LONDON

'creative digital' of "300+" established firms…?

BUT

- anchor firms but no R&D
- diverse sector, weak networks
- ec dev innovation focused but not collaborative

2. Expanding Digital Opportunity?
human capital development from within...

GREENSBORO

InnovateGSO
Accelerating Inclusive Innovation

"purposefully engaging under-connected populations - **college students, people of color, immigrants, millennials, retirees, scientists, artists & academic inventors** - to create a design destination that … establishes Greensboro as an **epicenter for inclusive innovation**"

The **Personal Navigator** &

Union Square Campus Phase 2

LONDON

"It's **very polarized in London. People are either doing extremely well or extremely not well. To me, that's where that digital divide is**." (confidential interview).

- uneven access in schools
- WFD & immigrant orgs disconnected from digital
- non-tech start-ups defunded

3. Governing Digital Opportunity?
policy, governance & 'inclusive innovation'

GREENSBORO

- **passive fed/state policy role (grants); HB2 (!?!)**
  - multiple foundations & civic leadership 'tables'
  - engaged universities
  - collaborative economic development orgs
- **multiple investments, 'small bets'**

BUT

  - corporate leadership absent
  - local govt & innovation agenda disconnected
  - minority leadership under-represented
  - weak collective identity/vision
- **fragmentation & one-off projects**
- **no formal strategic plan**

LONDON

- **fed, provincial & municipal ed dev/innovation policy (funded programs)**
  - activist local govt and non-profit civic leadership
- ***London Plan & Community and Economic Roadmap***

BUT

  - corporate leadership absent
  - university disengaged
  - parochialism (& racism!)
  - weak collective identity/vision
- **competitive economic development orgs**
- **formal strategic plans but contested**

3 theoretical frames re-visited

"these are not [yet] 'success' stories" (Clarke & Gaile, 1998)

- **regional innovation?**

  inter-firm networks are weak & business leadership absent; firms alone won't drive transformation

  BUT beyond 'eds & meds', *digital innovation in both cases*

- **collaborative governance & planning?**

  even "meaningful" inclusion no guarantee; policy can also encourage competition

  BUT civic leadership & multi-actor governance important drivers & *intentional inclusion evident in one case*

- **urban politics?**

  power, participation & interests shape urban development agendas;

  regional innovation & collaborative planning "will fail without attention to local politics" (Giloth, 2004)

key takeaways (so far)...

- **'inclusive innovation' in the digital economy?** digital innovation underway but digital inclusion remains a work in progress

- **size matters:** mid-sized cities face different challenges (Wolfe, 2009; Wolfe & Bramwell, 2008, 2016)

- **local capacity matters:** shifting roles of local actors and governance dynamics (Hanson et al.; Bramwell & Pierre, 2016; Clarke, 2016; Gross, 2016; Stoker et al. 2016)

- **policy matters:** innovation policy mix needs to be sensitive to local capacity and have inclusion components (Todtling & Trippl, 2008; Bramwell, 2012; Bradford, 2016)

	Greensboro	**London**
Creating?	NANOTECH collaborative ec dev orgs but not tech focused	'CREATIVE DIGITAL' competitive tech-focused ec dev orgs
Expanding?	InnovateGSO	not much...
Governing?	civic leadership & multiple investments BUT weak local democracy & no strategic plan	activist local govt & strategic plans BUT divided electorate & contested plan
	DIFFUSE	DISCONNECTED