

From urban vitality to urban vitalisation: Trust, distrust, and citizenship regimes in a Smart City initiative

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a shift in attention from urban vitality to urban vitalisation as a process that reflects ongoing interactions between residents, communities, and urban government agencies. To explore urban vitalisation, we offer a conceptual framework connecting two theoretical terms, trust/distrust and citizenship regimes, and we ask in what ways relations between trust/distrust (of residents in their municipality) and citizenship regimes explain residents' engagement in smart urban vitalisation. To answer this question, we present a case study of a group of Haifa residents who used a digital platform to push for improvement in the ways the local government accommodated their needs. Based on our analysis, we make two arguments of potential interest to scholars and stakeholders involved in smart city initiatives. First, both trust and distrust can motivate residents' involvement in smart city initiatives. Second, examining trust and distrust in light of the relevant citizenship regime (individual-liberal and civic-republican) sheds light on relational and dynamic configurations of residents' involvement in the process of smart urban vitalisation.

1. Introduction

The field of smart cities is concerned with making all things urban “smart” by digital means, constantly redefining what smartness means and following trends in business, hi-tech, and governmentality. It has many stakeholders – entrepreneurs, decision makers, developers, residents, and researchers – and it circulates billions of dollars annually.

In this paper, we focus on the relations between smart cities and urban vitality. Whilst there is a growing body of academic literature on smart cities and on vital cities, the connections between them, leading to *smart urban vitality*, is less explored. As Nederhand et al. note in the introduction to this edited volume, “The vital city is a city of relations and (inter)action between urban residents and communities and across multiple levels.” For Yue et al. (2021), urban vitality is reflected in the density and concentration of people in urban spaces; therefore, they explore vitality as an outcome. We, however, analyse the conditions required to create smart urban vitality. To this end, we focus on processes of *urban vitalisation*, including their less-explored political aspects (Hartley, 2021).

By urban vitalisation, we refer to a process that reflects ongoing interactions between residents, communities, and urban government

agencies. To shift attention from urban vitality to urban vitalisation, we examine the dynamic expression of two theoretical concepts, trust/distrust and citizen regimes, and analyse how they play out in one smart city initiative. We ask in what ways relations between trust/distrust (of residents in their municipality) and citizenship regimes can explain residents' engagement in smart urban vitalisation.

To explore this question, we take a case study approach, considering the activities of residents in the Hadar neighbourhood in Haifa, a northern Israeli city and one of the leading smart cities in Israel. In past decades, Hadar has been neglected by the municipality and has thus remained underdeveloped (Author 1). In 2015, neighbourhood residents started using a digital platform to monitor the municipality's actions, hoping it would lead to improvements. Based on our analysis, we make two arguments. First, both trust and distrust can motivate residents' involvement in smart city initiatives. Second, examining trust and distrust in light of the relevant citizenship regime (e.g., individual-liberal and civic-republican) sheds light on relational and dynamic configurations of residents' involvement in the process of smart urban vitalisation.

The next section of the paper reviews the relevant definitions and analytical perspectives of trust, distrust, and citizenship regimes and

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offers a theoretical discussion on the ability of their juxtaposition to explain relational smart urban vitalisation. The third section presents our methodology, and the fourth describes the case of Haifa's Hadar neighbourhood. In the last section of the article, we discuss the contributions of our study to the political theory of and public policy on smart cities.

2. Literature review

2.1. Smart cities from urban vitality to urban vitalisation

Smart city is a slippery concept, difficult to visualise and make legible (Caprotti, 2019, p. 2466). Smart cities usually refer to cities that seek to improve city life and management by applying digital technologies. Kitchin (2017) argues there are three broad understandings, which are not mutually exclusive, of what a smart city is: it could refer to the digital computation of urban infrastructures and services creating new forms of governmentality; it could refer to the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) producing smarter residents, workers, policy, and programs that, in turn, allow urban resilience and sustainability; and it could refer to a resident-centric model of development that fosters social innovation and social justice, civic engagement, vitality and hactivism, and thus builds on a less neoliberal ethos of market-led and technocratic solutions. Therefore, the smart city urban vitality perspective corresponds to the second and third definitions.

Much of the scholarly research on smart cities is conducted from a macro, top-down perspective. For example, Cardullo and Kitchin's argument about the technocratic agenda of neoliberal urbanism (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2019) is based on their analysis of how the European Innovation Partnership for Smart Cities and Communities (EIP-SCC) actively and swiftly forms marketisation and neoliberal governance across diverse European cities. Their evaluation of smart city participation in Dublin suggests companies and city administrations perform "forms of civic paternalism (deciding what is best for residents) and stewardship (delivering on behalf of residents)" (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2019, p. 814). Although growing numbers of bottom-up, community-driven, and activist initiatives seek to create an alternative kind of smart city (Kitchin et al., 2018, p. 20), a ground-level thick description of how such initiatives emerge and work in cities, as well as an analysis of "actually existing smart cities" (Shelton et al., 2015), is still lacking.

Other scholars of urban life take a more bottom-up perspective. Scholars such as Henri Lefebvre (1996 [1967]), Jane Jacobs (1969), and James Holston (2009) note the active agency of urban residents and their participation in the production of urban life, social space, and insurgent citizenship. By the same token, according to Batty (2018), cities are more like organisms than machines, in that "they are the product of countless individual and group decisions that do not conform to any grand plan" (Batty, 2018, p. 5).

These scholars give us a set of useful tools to expand on what Trencher (2019) calls "Smart City 2.0". Whereas "Smart City 1.0" is regarded as the dominant techno-economic and centralised approach for corporate interests, Trencher presents Smart City 2.0 as a decentralised, people-centric approach that fosters collaborative participation. Based on his research on a digitally-driven rural living support system in Aizuwakamatsu (Fukushima, Japan), Trencher argues that a smart city project can improve the livelihoods of residents and create a hybrid reality wherein conflicting yet complementary visions and approaches of Smart City 1.0 and 2.0 co-exist (Ibid).

A third perspective analyses smart cities as a *collaborative* endeavour. According to Trencher and Karvonen (2019), smart technologies can be incorporated into bottom-up strategies to provide social services and

empower residents through collaborative governance arrangements. This collaborative initiative reflects smart *urban vitalisation*, where we see an active and dynamic process that includes the involvement of residents, investors, decision-makers, and other groups who together engage in the development and implementation of smart city initiatives. The collaborative mode of operation is new in both practice and research. It is perceived by some as an optimal way to develop smart cities because it includes both the bottom-up and top-down perspectives in a more balanced way, thereby integrating interests instead of exploiting some to benefit others (Jiang, 2020; Jiang et al., 2020; Zukin, 2020). However, the theory is still in an initial stage of development (Batty, 2018, p. 182; Jiang, 2020).

Our interest in examining smart urban vitalisation follows Cowley et al. (2018) who explore the variegated ways smart city programs in the UK attempted to mobilise "publicness." They identify four modalities denoting how citizens are positioned within smart cities: "service-user," "entrepreneurial," "political," and "civic" (Ibid, 54). These modalities frame citizens differently: from consumers through market-oriented innovators, to participants in public discussions and activists. From the perspective of smart urban vitalisation, when the framing of residents is more active, there is more potential to achieve urban vitality.

This paper examines the dynamic relations between residents and their municipality and focuses on the conditions that enable or obstruct residents' contribution to smart urban vitality. By exploring vitalisation as a process, we draw on Pløger's (2006:395) definition of urban vitalism as "a modality of life, a will, a force of becomings, that is stimulated by the flows, encounters, proximity, heterogeneity, fluidity, transformativity, and/or mobility of urban everyday life," and put it in motion.

To shift attention from urban vitality to urban vitalisation, we embrace trust/distrust and citizen regimes as theoretical concepts to help explain diverse mechanisms underlying residents' involvement in smart cities. The next section explains the concepts of trust and distrust; this is followed by a section presenting the relevant concepts of citizenship regimes.

2.2. Trust and distrust

Trust is an intangible resource and is part of the relationships between people and between and within organisations. On an individual level, trust involves the expectations and the willingness of one side (Person A) to take a risk by believing that the other side (Person B) will not take advantage, cause harm, or embrace opportunistic behaviour (Klijn et al., 2010; Luo, 2005; Van de Walle & Six, 2014; Wilson, 2007). On a community level, trust includes "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 26). Trust is beneficial for both organisations and individuals because it enables collective action (Warren, 2018). It facilitates more straightforward connections, thus enabling communication. It requires less coercion and reduces the transaction cost between sides (Klijn et al., 2010). As Bowles argues (Bowles, 2016), trust and institutions reinforce one another. For example, trust affects the functioning, the capacities and the public legitimisation of democratic governments (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2020; Fukuyama, 1995; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Van de Walle & Lahat, 2017; Woo et al., 2015). However, trust is not necessarily a precondition for collaboration between stakeholders (Getha-Taylor et al., 2019). Collaboration can begin with different levels of trust, which may change during the process (Cepiku, 2014; Tu & Xu, 2020).

Although most researchers agree on the importance of trust to public administration and government performance, *distrust* is relatively

neglected in the literature (Van de Walle & Six, 2014). Trust and distrust can be viewed as opposites (Bouckaert, 2012; Van de Walle & Lahat, 2017), but Van de Walle & Six, 2014 claim distrust is not the opposite of trust and should not mark the end of a trust continuum. They explain: “Distrust is not the absence of trust, but an attitude in itself. It is an actual expectation that another actor cannot be relied upon and will engage in harmful behaviour” (Van de Walle & Six, 2014, p. 162). Distrust starts with a negative disposition; trust starts with a positive disposition and includes a “leap of faith”. In fact, the complexity and multifaced relations (e.g., cognitive, and psychological interpretations) between people or organisations mean trust cannot be definitively separated from distrust (Lewicki et al., 1998). In other words, trust and distrust can exist simultaneously (Van de Walle & Six, 2014). For example, based on experience, an individual can trust a person or a government agency to complete a certain task or give good service in a specific field, but at the same time, distrust that person or agency in the context of other tasks or services.

Although citizens' trust in their government is usually perceived as beneficial to the functioning of governments, too much trust can lead to inactive and naïve citizens with low expectations of their government (Van de Walle & Six, 2014). As Warren claims: “A trust relationship is democratically legitimate just to the extent that it could be justified to those affected by its externalities” (Warren, 2018, p. 82). Since too much trust can lead to the suppression of vitality, some level of distrust is needed to enable an active democracy, but too much distrust can lead to cynicism and disengagement of citizens from the political process (Warren, 2018).

In the literature on smart cities, socio-political perspectives are increasingly used by scholars (Hartley, 2021). This includes only a minimal amount of work on trust. For example, Matheus et al. (2018) looked at the effect of using digital dashboards that offer information; this technology is supposed to lead to more transparency and greater trust in smart cities' governments. They suggest that when these dashboards are poorly designed, they lead to distrust in the local government (see also Mattern, 2021). Looking at Hong Kong residents, Hartley (2021) explored how trust and political legitimacy affect smart cities' endeavours. He found that even though trust in technology was high, citizens expressed concerns about the handling of security and privacy in smart city projects. Keymolen and Voorwinden (2020) claim smart cities lead to the de-subjectivation and invisibility of people and processes and are based on neoliberal values; therefore, they erode citizens' trust of the municipality. At the same time, the municipality's distrust of its citizens can lead to the use of algorithms and cameras to trace problematic behaviours such as frauds. Keymolen and Voorwinden (2020) suggest policymakers should embrace a negotiating strategy involving citizens and the municipality to retain the place of citizenship in the political space of the city. In their view, this process should include the re-subjectivation of citizens, transparency, and a clear articulation of the vulnerability of the process. According to this perspective, to foster trust between citizens and the municipality, policymakers need to take a more citizen-centric perspective.

2.3. Citizenship regimes

Jenson and Papillon (2000) define a citizenship regime as “the institutional arrangements, rules and understanding that guide and shape concurrent policy decisions and expenditure of the states, problem definitions by states and citizens, and claims-making by citizens” (p. 246).² The term includes several different aspects, such as the recognition of rights, the political rules of the game, the historical and cultural aspects that affect citizens' rights, and the boundaries of the nation, as well as the inclusion and exclusion of individuals within it (Jenson &

² Their definition is based on their previous work and adaptation from Esping-Andersen (1990). See note 3 in Jenson & Papillon, 2000.

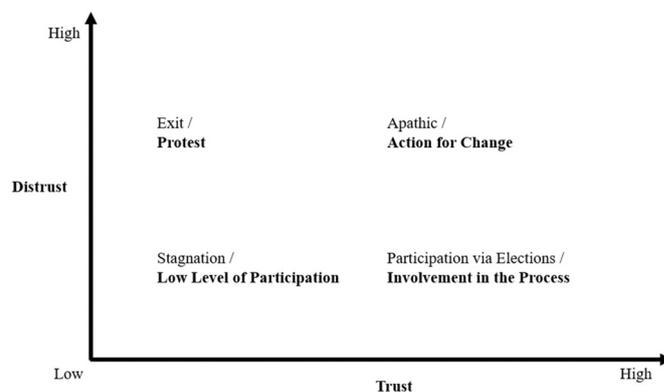


Fig. 1. Modes of residents' participation: Trust, distrust, and citizenship regimes in the process of urban vitalisation. Note: The eight modes refer first to the liberal citizenship regime and then to the civic-republican citizenship regime (the latter in bold).

Papillon, 2000). In this paper, we use the bottom-up perspective of citizenship regimes to probe city residents' perceptions of the political rules of the game, arguing this leads to the pattern of their political participation. Such a bottom-up perspective, in turn, allows us to explore the dynamic process of smart urban vitalisation.

Fig. 1 shows our typology based on two models of citizenship regimes, “individual-liberal” and “civic-republican” (in bold), as presented by Joss et al. (2017). The individual-liberal regime is based on the idea of representative citizenship; this type of regime reflects low levels of residents' participation. The civic-republican regime perceives citizenship as an ongoing process via the active participation of citizens in the governing process; thus, this type of regime reflects a high level of residents' involvement in shaping their urban lifeworld. Combining these regimes with levels of trust and distrust leads to a conceptual space (Fig. 1) where we identified eight modes of residents' involvement in the political process as an expression of and participation in urban vitalisation.

We assume residents' involvement in political processes will be lower overall in an individual-liberal regime than in a civic-republican regime. Yet nuanced differences become apparent when we place the eight modes of operation on a trust/distrust continuum. For example, people in an individual-liberal regime who have relatively higher trust and distrust may have an apathetic reaction. They may have naïve faith in the municipality as an organization but distrust their politicians, and the socio-political environment does not encourage them to be active in political life. Situations that include high trust and low distrust could be expressed, for example, by voting in municipal elections, but the opposite situation of high distrust and low trust could lead to an avoidance of the election process and the consideration of an exit from the political process (Hirschman, 1970). In a civic-republican regime, the presence of both high trust and distrust may lead to people becoming actively involved in political change, as they do not believe the municipality's intentions are good (distrust), but at the same time, they have some level of positive expectations of the municipality (trust). However, people with both low trust and high distrust may actively protest against the municipality, expressing their voices more openly in the political process (Hirschman, 1970).

Based on the modes of residents' participation (Fig. 1), we conceptualise urban vitalisation as a dynamic process reflecting the dialectics between trust/distrust and citizenship regimes and leading to urban vitality, as presented in Fig. 2.

We explore this conceptualisation in the field of smart cities, focusing on the ways relations between trust/distrust (of residents in their municipality) and citizenship regimes may explain residents' engagement in smart urban vitalisation.

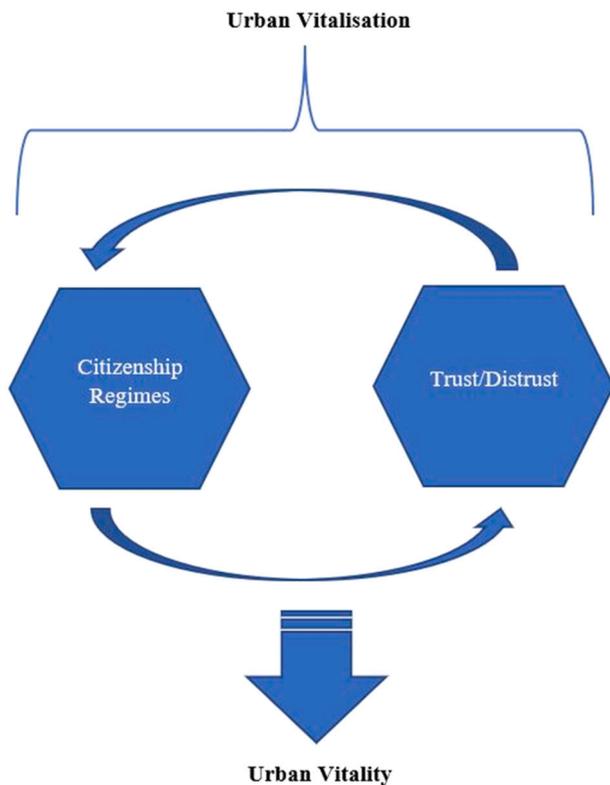


Fig. 2. Urban vitalisation conceptual framework.

3. Method

There are diverse ways to explore trust and distrust. Many studies implement scales and measure trust and distrust based on surveys and people's responses to different statements. We took a different approach and used a qualitative method (see, e.g., Davidovitz & Cohen, 2020; Grøn & Salomonsen, 2019), more specifically, a digital urban ethnography (Lane, 2019), to determine how levels of trust and distrust enable or obstruct residents' involvement in smart city initiatives.

Our research stemmed from a long-term ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2017 by the first author in the neighbourhood of Hadar in Haifa, a city in Northern Israel (Author 1). In 2014, Haifa was ranked by IESE as the leading smart city in the Middle East,³ and in 2018, Haifa was ranked seventh in Israel's Smart and Sustainable Cities Index created by IDC Herzliya.⁴

During the last years of the research, street level interactions between residents were accompanied by online interactions, mainly through Facebook groups, where participants interact in a many-to-many logic of communication (Caliandro, 2018). In order to maintain ethnographic holism, we expanded the classic participant-observation to include computer-mediated communication (Garcia et al., 2009; Hammersley, 2018), and we regarded both the online and offline realms of social interactions as signifiers of the same phenomenon (Boellstorff et al., 2012; Hallett & Barber, 2014, p. 307; Hine, 2000, 2011; Kavanaugh & Patterson, 2001; Lester, 2020; Miller & Slater, 2001; Murthy, 2008; Pink et al., 2016; Robinson & Schulz, 2009). The integration of online and offline interactions allowed us to follow participants' interactions in different sites (Marcus, 1995) and therefore to collect data with greater validity than is typical of either urban ethnography or

digital ethnography alone (see Lane, 2019, p. 169).

For this article, we focused on interactions in and around one of Hadar neighbourhood's Facebook groups, "Fix it, Please - Hadar" (*Na Letaken* in Hebrew), established as a public group by neighbourhood residents in 2015 and still active with more than two thousand members. The group's goal is to allow residents to document what needs to be fixed, to notify the municipality, to follow up on repairs – and to do all this publicly, so everyone can see. Our research was based on qualitative analysis of posts published between 2015 and 2021 (including residents' online interactions with the municipality's employees), as well as on offline interactions with neighbourhood residents. By exploring residents' online and offline activities and their interactions with municipal employees, we were able to infer their levels of trust/distrust in the municipality, as well as their perceptions of the political rules of the game (citizenship regime), as a collective. We also conducted face-to-face interviews with key figures to get a fuller conceptualisation of residents' involvement in the vitalisation process. In so doing, we complemented our unobtrusive direct observation of residents' expressions of trust and distrust in their municipality with their own interpretations of their online and offline practices (Kavanaugh & Maratea, 2019). The methodology we used, enriched by a secondary analysis of two surveys examining residents' trust in the municipality, allowed us to explore a theoretical perspective integrating trust/distrust with citizenship regimes (Fig. 1) and examine this over time to shed light on processes of vitalisation.

The limitation of the study arises from our focus on stated motivations and on observed interactions (online and offline) with respect to the municipality's maintenance responsibilities, without comparing these to the municipality's actions on the ground. There could be gaps between the experiences and interpretations of residents and what the municipality is actually doing. However, since our goal was to examine the roles of trust and distrust in residents' vitality, we were interested in the actual motivation to establish the Facebook group and to maintain it, regardless of the validity of people's perceptions. The findings centre on smart city phenomena from the residents' point of view and may be relevant for other smart cities around the world. In this regard, we wanted to ensure transferability of the findings, not generalisation (Malterud, 2001).

4. Case background

Hadar is an ethno-nationally mixed neighbourhood in Haifa, located on Mount Carmel in Northern Israel. Although established in the early 20th century as a neighbourhood for Haifa's Jewish residents (Aharonowitz, 1958, p. 44), it was never exclusively Jewish. Parts of the neighbourhood were always inhabited by Arabs, and throughout the years, their population in the neighbourhood as property owners and renters has grown steadily. In 1972, 1.8 % of Hadar's residents were Arabs; in 1983, they represented 4.9 %, and in 1992, 8.4 % (Ben-Artzi, 1996, p. 289). By 2013, this had jumped to 23 % of the neighbourhood's close to 40,000 residents (Haifa Municipality, 2015).

The growth of Arabs as a key component of Hadar's population took place simultaneously with the neighbourhood's loss of status as Haifa's city centre. Until the 1960s, Hadar had a flourishing business and cultural life. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, several processes had an effect on the neighbourhood: infrastructure was not regularly maintained and suffered from neglect. Shopping malls were built outside the neighbourhood, damaging business life in the neighbourhood. The Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), a prestigious higher-education institution, moved its faculties out of Hadar; both students and faculty members moved to the new location. Immigrants from the USSR with limited resources settled in the neighbourhood. Finally, residents who wished to upgrade their standard of living moved to better neighbourhoods farther uphill. The cumulative result of all these forces was a deepening process of underdevelopment, a growing sense of neglect and insecurity, and a decline in real-estate value.

³ <https://www.iese.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ST-0333.pdf>.

⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20210102120957/https://smartcities.co.il/city/חיפה>

During the 1990s, another wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union settled in Hadar, and those who could afford it moved out several years later. With around 50 % of residents living there as renters,⁵ Hadar became known as a transit neighbourhood, with residents seeking opportunities to move out.

In a survey conducted in 2005 with about 140 residents of Hadar (Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian speakers), most respondents said their neighbourhood was in a process of decline.⁶ For many, the advantages of the neighbourhood were cheap and accessible shopping (albeit low quality) and good transportation to destinations outside the neighbourhood (for work, study, and leisure). The neighbourhood's downsides were the noticeable neglect, deteriorating infrastructure (dirty streets, broken sidewalks and roads, lack of services and activities for a variety of ages), lack of jobs, and high crime rates (break-ins, drugs, violence, prostitution) generating a general sense of insecurity.

Since the early 2000s, there has been ongoing discussion about the need to "renew" and "revitalise" the neighbourhood. Several plans have been presented, either by the municipality or by private entrepreneurs, all aiming to attract "young populations" from elsewhere whilst disregarding residents already living in the neighbourhood, not taking their needs and desires into account and not considering them as potential collaborators in planning and materialising such plans. An examination of some of these plans reveals that by "young" population, the planners imagined middle-class Ashkenazi Jews (of American or European origin) who were not necessarily young. These plans have been adopted by the municipality but never fully implemented (see Nathansohn, 2017).

5. Results

5.1. Distrust, potential trust, and smart urban vitalisation: Hadar neighbourhood

As the preceding discussion suggests, Hadar has an individual-liberal citizenship regime expressed by centralist top-down policies and low levels of residents' participation. Our findings report observations from 2015 onwards.

In February 2015, given their growing disappointment with and distrust of the municipality (see Nathansohn, 2017), several neighbourhood activists started a Facebook group dedicated to uploading photos of broken infrastructure. Their goal was to get the municipality's attention, to publicly push it to take back its responsibilities and regain residents' trust. They called the group "Fix it, Please - Hadar" (*Na Letaken* in Hebrew), and described it, in Hebrew only, as follows⁷:

Photographing. Reporting. Uploading. Fixing! Have you ever walked down the street and stumbled, because there was a hole in the sidewalk? Sometimes it seems that we got too much used to the environment we live in, and lost the sense of healthy criticism. This group [...] is intended to bring back to the personal and collective consciousness all those hazards in the public space that the Haifa Municipality was supposed to repair. Like what? Potholes in the sidewalk and on the road, improper playground facilities, improper or missing street lights, broken, overloaded or stinking trash bins, vandalism, construction debris, dangerous walls, damaged railings and sign posts, and more [...].

So, what do we do? We photograph what needs to be repaired, report to the municipality's hotline, and upload the photo to this group with an indication of time and location and preferably also the hotline's call number for follow-up [...].

A few months after the group was established, we met with Jacob, who had become an administrator thanks to his neighbourhood activism and to his dominant participation in the group. It is hard to catch Jacob walking around the neighbourhood without a camera, and it is difficult for Jacob to walk around the neighbourhood without capturing some hazard or some damaged or shaky infrastructure. In our conversation on his motivation to join the group, Jacob expressed his shock about the neighbourhood's state of neglect:

Before moving here in 2010, what I saw here was trees and beautiful houses between the trees, and Haifa Bay, and the Bahá'í temple. The beauty of Haifa. I wasn't used to living in such conditions. This was disgraceful. I started walking around the neighbourhood and saw this thing and said, "Good lord, how do people live in such conditions?" I took a decision not to allow anyone to train me to live in this garbage.

Jacob's disappointment with the way the municipality treats residents reflects a low level of trust in the municipality. At the same time, his notion that the municipality is "training the residents" to live in such conditions reflects an active distrust (negative disposition) in the municipality.

Jacob spends hours in the public space every day and is well connected in the neighbourhood. During one of our conversations in the winter of 2016, he started getting several text messages. He apologised for checking them and explained that he was asked to take a few photos in the nearby Hillel Street, where following a malfunction in the municipal infrastructure, the street was flooded with sewage. Residents had called the municipality, but the situation had not been remedied. The municipal hotline representative promised someone would come again, but in the meantime, a number of residents put up signs saying "Hillel Spring" in the area and asked Jacob to document it. Hillel Street was a five-minute walk from where we met, so we walked there together. As we walked down the street, the smell of sewage became more disgusting. "The smell now is relatively bearable," one of the residents told us. "The municipality promised that someone will come the next morning, but in the meantime, we have no choice but to pray for a heavy rain that will clean it up." This comment suggests the residents have some level of trust in the municipality. At the same time, they know they need to get involved and push the municipality into action in order to regain full trust, thereby perceiving themselves as actors in a civic-republican citizenship regime.

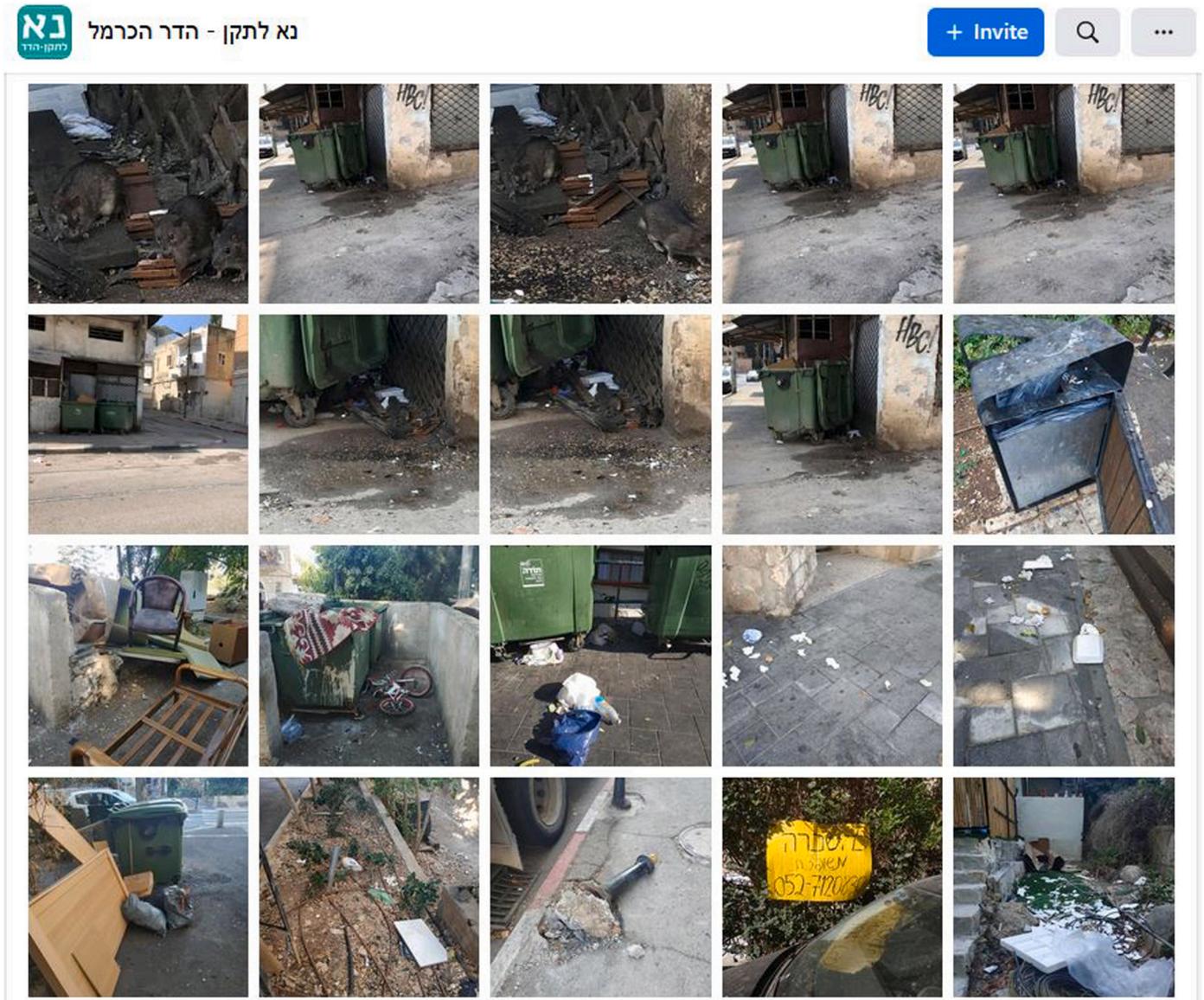
In our conversations about his role as one of the Facebook group's administrators, Jacob said his vision is "that Haifa municipality will change the way it sees Hadar, that it will finally understand it cannot allow Hadar to be dirty." To achieve this goal, the administrators, according to Jacob, must play "a sensitive game". They cannot be too aggressive, because they still have some trust in the municipality and seek its collaboration. Thinking how he can use the platform to regain trust in the municipality, Jacob said: "If the municipality will stop responding, we'll increase our pressure, and I'll post ten photos each day".

The Facebook group's membership grew steadily, and within 6 years of its establishment in 2015, the group had more than two thousand members. During the first couple of years, more than 10 residents became prominent members, uploading several posts every day with photos of various hazards and malfunctions, such as uncollected garbage, broken sidewalks, broken trash containers, broken banisters and street-signs, and sewage (see screenshot 1).

⁵ Haifa Municipality's Statistical Areas Profile (2015).

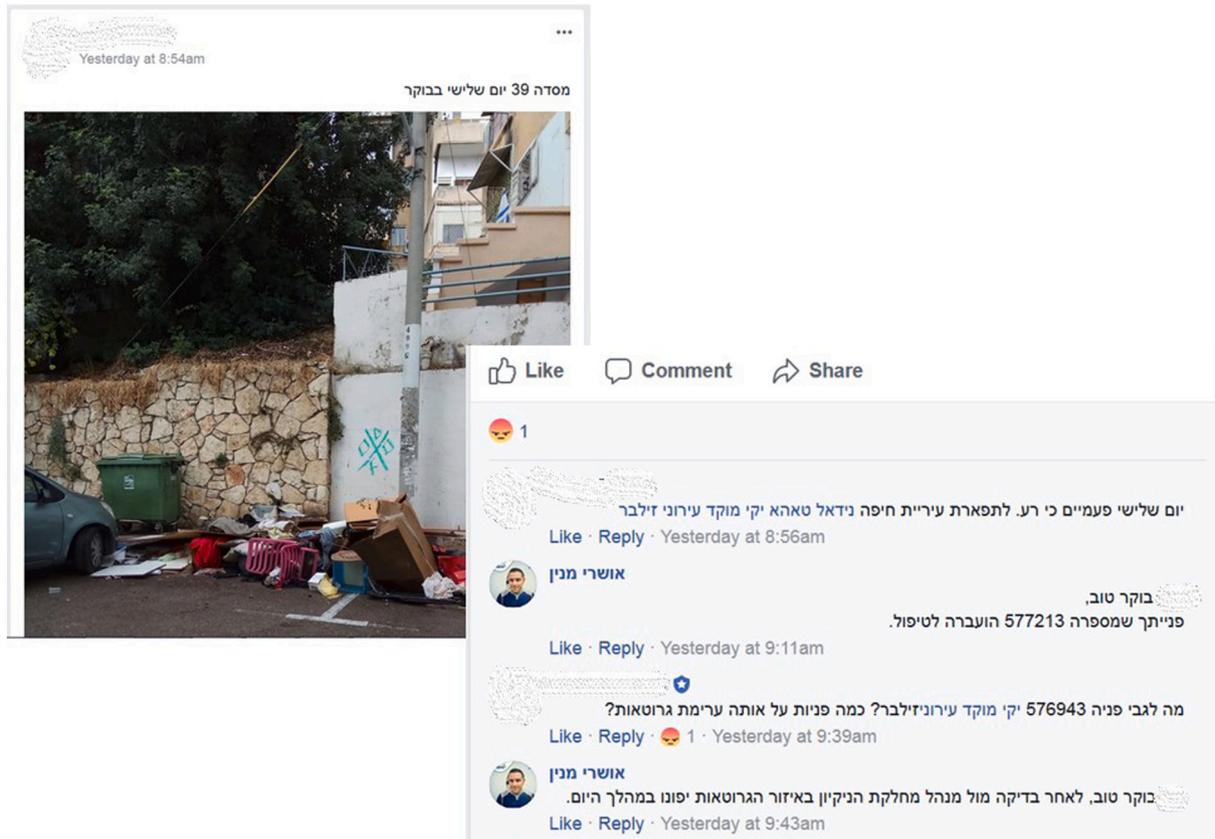
⁶ The survey was conducted by anthropology students at Haifa University. We thank Prof. Amalia Sa'ar and her students for giving us access to the data they collected.

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/870053209721391>.



Screenshot 1. Screenshot from “Na Letaken” Photo Gallery (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/naletakenhadar/media>, visited: 28 May 2021).

As opposed to other platforms, such as the municipality's hotline or its smart phone application, where photos of things to be fixed can be uploaded although without being public, the goal of this Facebook group is to make these images public and to accompany them with follow-up on how and whether the municipality is fixing them. At the beginning, the municipality did not respond to the posts, but group members started tagging municipality employees on their posts, and they gradually started responding to the various complaints (see screenshot 2).



Screenshot 2. Screenshot from “Na Letaken” post, 21 November 2017. In the text of the original post, a neighbourhood resident indicates the day (Tuesday morning) and location (39 Massada Street) of a garbage pile on the sidewalk. The first comment by that person tags two municipality employees with a remark that cynically glorifies Haifa Municipality. The second comment is posted 15 min later by a municipality employee, indicating the call number and its status. The third comment is posted 28 min later by one of the group's administrators, asking about another pile of garbage (with a different call number) that was not removed after several complaints. The fourth comment is posted 4 min afterwards by the same municipality employee indicating that the garbage will be cleared that day (visited: 22 November 2017).

For a while, the municipality representatives' online replies to such posts included a request to file the complaint through the municipality's hotline or mobile application. However, the administrators of the Facebook group argued this would hide complaints from the public eye, as neither the hotline nor the application shows all the data to the general public. They therefore encouraged people to keep posting their complaints through the Facebook group, thereby reflecting both their trust and distrust in the municipality. As active agents in a civic-republican citizenship regime, they offered their own solution, based on a social media digital platform, as means to improve the municipality's performance.

The reasoning behind making urban hazards and malfunctions visible on Facebook rests on the assumption that publicly presenting what is framed as wrong will lead to its repair. Posting such images online is a type of civil engagement that allows wider, sometimes

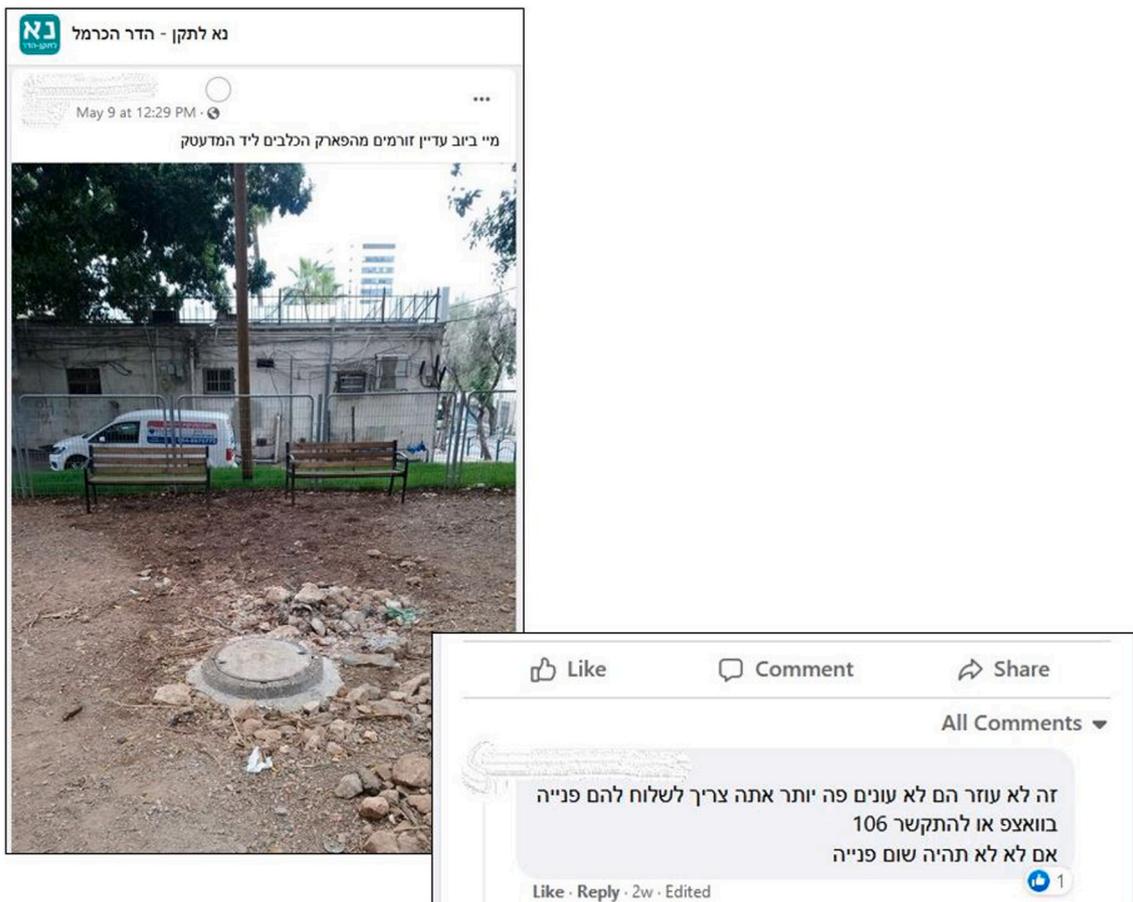
heated, discussions to emerge on the responsibilities of the municipality. These, in turn, can be seen as ideological debates on the actual, the required, and the desired citizenship regime.

“Originally, we opened the group as a protest,” another one of the Facebook group's administrators told us in winter 2017. He added:

At first, we created a good dialogue [with the municipality] but then their reactions became laconic: when they saw our posts, they noted that they had opened a call in their own system, and then concluded with “have a nice day”. So, I stopped tagging them on my posts. [...] I have good memory, so when I see a post that was not attended by the

municipality – I repost it, to show that it was not taken care of. [...] My goal is to have an application that would make the aggregation of our data more efficient, so we could better follow up on the municipality's actions. So far it is just a vision.

According to Jacob, not too long thereafter, before the 2018 municipal elections, municipality representatives stopped responding to the Facebook group altogether, probably because they did not want to contribute to the online traffic of what they might have interpreted as negative publicity during the mayor's campaign. Jacob added that following the election of the new mayor, the municipality's representatives have still refrained from commenting on the group, but they do follow the posts and sometimes fix what is reported (see screenshot 3). Moreover, Jacob added, “When I call to the municipality's hotline today, they immediately recognise me and take care of whatever I report.”



Screenshot 3. Screenshot from “Na Letaken” post, 9 May 2021. In the text in the original post, a neighbourhood resident indicates that sewage water is still flowing in the dog park near the Madatech museum. One of the comments on this post, written by another neighbourhood resident draws the attention of readers to the fact that the municipality employees quit responding to this group’s posts, and encourages the author of the original post to contact the municipality by WhatsApp or call the municipality’s hotline (visited: 28 May 2021).

Jacob’s notion that the municipality has become more responsive reflects a growing level of trust and a simultaneous decrease of distrust in the municipality. This standpoint is different from the clear distrust expressed in the previous years, as mentioned earlier. A public opinion survey conducted among Haifa residents between November 2019 and January 2020 (Beeri, 2020) has some interesting findings on the political dispositions of Hadar residents. Out of seven districts in the city, Hadar was in the middle (third) in political engagement and ranked highest in resident satisfaction with Haifa municipality’s services, responsiveness, transparency and responsibility, and innovation. With respect to public participation and trust in local leadership, Hadar residents placed third from the top out of the seven districts (Beeri, 2020). A mean of around 2.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5) suggests a need for improvement; however, many of the indicators for Haifa residents, such as innovation, satisfaction with the city services, and responsiveness, show a growing sense of satisfaction with city services and a growing trust in the municipality.

Examining the identity of the active members of this Facebook group reveals that all are Jewish residents of the mixed neighbourhood. In a discussion that followed a presentation of an earlier version of this paper at a public event in Haifa, one of the Arab activists in the neighbourhood explained:

Our difficulty is to survive the day. Many people have their own difficulties, and clearly there are people who care and call the municipality’s hotline. But there are also those who repair things by themselves, paving a road, for example. There is this mentality of doing things by yourself, because we don’t trust the municipality.

The pattern of involvement described by the Arab activist reflects an individual-liberal regime. The limited ability to be active (the need to survive) and the low level of trust, alongside a high level of distrust in the municipality, mean these residents leave the institutional political sphere and search for independent alternatives.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Instead of looking at urban vitality as a static condition, we explored

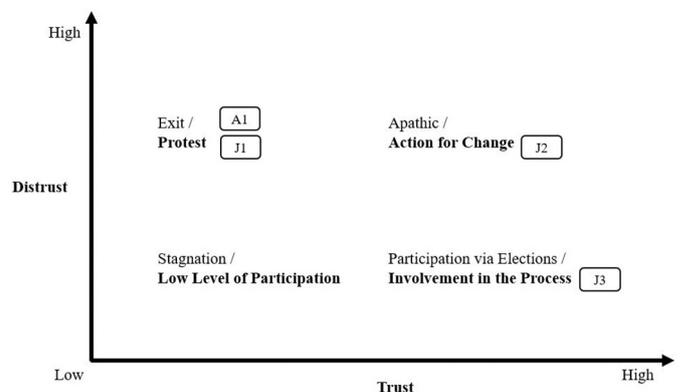


Fig. 3. Trust, distrust, and citizenship regimes in Hadar’s process of urban vitalisation.

urban vitalisation as a process reflecting the active participation of residents in shaping their surroundings and their interactions with urban government agencies. To empirically explore urban vitalisation, we used the case study of a group of Haifa residents using a digital platform to push for improvement in the ways the local government accommodated their needs. This case reflects a new vision of smart cities' digital initiatives as a bottom-up effort involving citizens (Kitchin et al., 2018; Ploger, 2006). We explored the dialectic relations between two theoretical terms – trust/distrust and civic regimes – and showed how these relations express a process of urban vitalisation.

We have two main findings. First, both trust and distrust play a role in residents' involvement in city life, and they are not mutually exclusive. Second, the dialectics between trust/distrust and civic regimes help to capture urban vitalisation as a process. We understand the changing dynamics of residents' involvement in Hadar neighbourhood as a configuration of changes in trust, distrust, and citizenship regimes.

Fig. 3 illustrates movement in the space of trust/distrust and citizenship regimes. We did not measure trust/distrust quantitatively, but our interpretation of residents' actions and expressions allows us to place them in this space. According to our analysis, in 2015, after having had enough of the municipality's neglect, Jewish residents in Hadar started to be more active. Their actions and expressions showed a low level of trust, along with a growing distrust. By becoming more active, they reflected a move from participating in an individual-liberal citizenship regime to a civic-republican regime. Shifting to a mode of digital protest (see J1 in Fig. 3) in order to change the municipality's practices, they expressed a process of urban vitalisation. The residents' involvement in a digital platform that publicly exposed the municipality's failures and demanded improved services placed external pressure on the municipality to consider the residents' needs in its supply of services. During the first years, when municipal employees were responsive to postings on the residents' Facebook Group page, the Jewish residents' trust grew, and their call for action crystallised (see J2 in Fig. 3). Following a decision made by municipal leaders, however, the city representatives stopped being responsive on Facebook. This, together with a decrease in residents' distrust, led to lower involvement of Jewish residents in the political process (see J3 in Fig. 3), expressed in lower, albeit steady, numbers of residents' posts on the platform in the last years of our research.

The abovementioned modes of operation did not include the Arab population. Here, the low level of trust and high level of distrust, combined with the individual-liberal civic regime, led to residents operating outside the institutional political sphere. To achieve their goals, they worked independently, without approaching the municipality. Thus, we did not observe a change in Arab residents' involvement and considered it an “exit” mode of participation (Hirschman, 1970; see also Mattern, 2021, pp. 114–116) (see A1 in Fig. 3).

The study's main theoretical contribution is the conceptualisation of “urban vitalisation” as a process based on the dialectics between trust/distrust and citizenship regimes (see Joss et al., 2017; Van de Walle & Six, 2014). Our study thus introduces a political theoretical lens that can contribute to the much-needed scholarship on smart cities as a collaborative effort putting citizens in the centre (Batty, 2018; Hartley, 2021; Jiang, 2020; Trencher & Karvonen, 2019).

We have drawn on a specific case study, but we believe our general arguments can be useful elsewhere (Malterud, 2001). We offer an extension of the notion of what smart city projects might look like. Not everyone would agree that the strategic use of social media is a smart city project, but other social-media-based projects have had similar goals and are considered leaders in the field. In 2015, the year “Fix it, Please” began in Hadar, Zencity, a start-up company with similar goals – to improve municipal services according to residents' needs and to increase their trust in the municipality – was established in Tel Aviv. Zencity's main product is a platform based on a machine-learning algorithm that promotes data-informed decision making. By collecting and analysing data in real time from various platforms, such as

municipality websites and social media, where residents comment on municipal services, the platform identifies the topics being discussed, the sentiments about them, and the geographical location. It then processes the data, sorts them according to various criteria, and shares them with the client – the relevant municipal office. Today, Zencity is one of the leading smart city start-up companies in Israel and internationally, selling its platform to over 150 local governments around the world (mainly in the USA).⁸ The company was highlighted in the Smart City Expo World Congress in November 2020 as the winner of the Governance and Economy Award.⁹

As the data Zencity feeds to its clients are not public, by comparing “Fix it, please” to Zencity, we can see different core values at the heart of the relationship between municipalities and residents. Our case of the Hadar neighbourhood reveals a mutual relationship (although not symmetric) between residents and the municipality, reflecting a relational smart urban vitalisation process, whilst the Zencity example reflects a neoliberal perspective seeing residents as customers, using their information but not collaborating with them. It, therefore, reflects the de-subjectivation and invisibility of residents (Keymolen & Voorwinden, 2020). As we have shown above, the civic-republican regime requires a more active role among residents, regardless of the levels of their trust/distrust in the governing institutions. If implemented in Hadar, Zencity's platform could have improved residents' trust in the municipality, but because it operates under the individual-liberal citizenship regime, it lacks the potential to transform this change into urban vitalisation. Clearly, whilst some object to the ongoing involvement of citizens in the political process because they say it hinders democracy (see, e.g., Tالشير, 2021), if the goal is to cultivate vital smart cities, active residents can create more vivid, interactive urban surroundings and, in our view, more resilient surroundings as well. Given the general move in public administration from responsiveness to collaboration and from regarding residents as customers to seeing them as citizens (Cowley et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2022; Vigoda, 2002), it is important to consider the core values of citizenship (Keymolen & Voorwinden, 2020) implemented in smart urban vitalisation processes, not just their outcomes.

The study also has practical implications. Policymakers, activists, and residents can embrace and employ three major steps. The first is turning distrust into action. Whilst trust is generally perceived as a condition for collaboration, our work highlights the role of distrust as a motivating force (Van de Walle & Six, 2014) and even suggests trust is not always needed for action (see also Cepiku, 2014; Getha-Taylor et al., 2019; Tu & Xu, 2020) or for urban vitality.

Second, it is important to identify modes that include low trust and high distrust. Such situations may lead to *exit* and to urban vitalism that takes place outside the mainstream political arena. In such situations, decision-makers may wish to actively create the conditions that will bring the residents into the policy arena to build even a low level of trust while not suppressing their vitalism.

Third, urban decision-makers who aspire to make their cities smart (er) should recognize that urban vitalization is not a direct and necessary outcome of digitization. In fact, and in contrast to “Fix it, Please”, the case of Zencity shows that digitalization may work *against* urban vitalization. By proposing a technology that could lead to improving residents' trust in local authorities, residents may feel less compelled to act and get involved in shaping urban spaces and practices. What we propose here is to consider the inter-dependence between trust/distrust and citizenship regimes and how it can (re-)subjectify residents and contribute to urban vitalization, also by digital means.

⁸ <https://zencity.io>.

⁹ https://www.smartcityexpo.com/press_release/smartcityexpo_s078-en/shanghai-chosen-smart-city-of-2020-at-smart-city-live.

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