

IN FOCUS:

SEADS FEATURE



SEADS @ KL Smart Cities Expo

By Emma Baulch

At the KL Smart Cities Expo 2025, SEADS hosted two expert panels, moderated by Professor Meera Sivasothy of Monash University Malaysia. The first panel, Indicators: Pros and Cons, featured Professor Chong Meng Nan, Hazirah Mohd Ghazali, and Professor Duncan McDuie-Ra.

The discussion explored how smart cities use data indicators to measure progress, highlighting both their potential and limitations. While some indicators are based on longstanding urban data, others stem from emerging technologies—or don't yet exist. Panelists examined which indicators best serve Kuala Lumpur's smart city goals and emphasised the need for context-aware, inclusive, and innovative approaches to urban data.

● Key Takeaways

- Indicators need to be aligned to the contextual needs of people in particular cities, not just copy-pasted.
- Need to devise ways of acting on and qualitatively analysing large amounts of data that are collected in smart cities
- Need to retain the function of the city as a space of refuge and an open space.
- High levels of surveillance and datafication can work against this.
- Need to plant more trees and retain green spaces to make the city more liveable.

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The second panel, Modelling: Who Should We Emulate?, featured Tham Wai Liang, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Peter Leong, KLRA+SD and Norhafiza Shafie, UNDP Malaysia. Modelling refers to taking smart city technologies used in other cities as models to emulate. In Asia, a very limited number of cities are used as models again and again, such as Songdo (Korea), Singapore, and Masdar (UAE).

In recent years, digital twinning has become a way to model future versions of current cities, adding further complexity. Prof Sivasothy invited the panel to reflect on the following questions: What kinds of cities can KL learn from in plotting its smart city journey? What value do some lesser known smart city cases have for KL, especially when it comes to retrofitting? And what are some of the downsides of modelling in Southeast Asia?

Key Takeaways

- Academic freedom is key to the success of smart city initiatives. Experts must be guaranteed the freedom to speak up if policies are having negative consequences.
- There is a need to critically assess what cities we seek to model KL on, and reflect deeply on whether such models are aligned with KL's realities and historical conditions
- There is a need to develop baseline measures of social and environmental impact to better understand

Feminist & Gender-Inclusive Approaches to Technology

This event will be a platform for Malaysian and Indonesian tech designers, artists and activists to discuss the rapid advance of digital and AI technology in terms of feminist intersectional and gender-inclusive approaches. One aspect of the discussion will be on how to cope with gender-based hatred and violence while maintaining a joyful feminist focus on pleasure, artistic creativity and digital care. The discussion will also tackle a new generation of Apps and platforms that are highly attractive to youth but also trained unethically on experiments with vulnerable people and databases. The panel will feature Natalie Loi (UnBound), Dhyta Caturani (PurpleCode Collective), returning panelists Ain Husniza (Pocket of Pink) and Dr Dyah Pitaloka (SEADS).



Date: 9th October 2025

Time: 12pm to 3pm

**Venue: Seminar Room 6214,
Monash University Malaysia**

Event is free via registration.

[Register for the event here!](https://forms.gle/56Gj9pHasYPvLkx6)

● Our Panelists



Dhyta Caturani
PurpleCode
Collective



Natalie Loi
Boleh Space
UnBound



Ain Husniza
Pocket of Pink



Dr Dyah Pitaloka
SEADS



Katrien Jacobs
SEADS

Moderated by

Digital Citizen Summit

While at DRAPAC25, Arran Ridley was invited to submit an adapted version of his 'Tracing Data Trails' workshop to Digital Citizen Summit (<https://dsummit.defindia.org/>).

This workshop titled "Tracing Platform Power - A Walking Method for Digital Accountability" has now been accepted for the summit taking place on 14-15 November in Hyderabad, India.

Digital platforms increasingly mediate urban life through payment systems, service delivery, and civic engagement, yet their accountability structures remain opaque to citizens.

While platforms extract value from urban spaces and citizen data, responsibility for failures, exclusions, and harms is often diffused across multiple actors. Citizens experience platform power as individual inconveniences rather than systemic governance issues.

This workshop uses "datawalking" - a situated research method - to help participants trace how platforms operate in urban space, identify accountability gaps, and examine who bears responsibility when platform-mediated services fail or exclude. The method connects embodied experience to structural analysis of platform governance.

Announcement



Arran Ridley is open to funding in order to attend the summit.

*To get in touch:
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MyKad and the Myth of Safety

By Preevena Devi

Digital IDs are often framed as harmless tools for convenience. But what if they are also instruments of surveillance woven into everyday life?

In Malaysia, the MyKad system was introduced as a breakthrough in governance, merging identification, healthcare access, and voting eligibility into a single card. Over time it became more than just proof of identity; it became the key to daily existence. On paper, this looks seamless. In practice, it concentrates power and risk.

The myth is that digital IDs simply make life easier. The reality is that they centralise sensitive personal data such as religion, address, biometrics, and family links into one vulnerable system.

Data breaches in Malaysia are already common, and unlike a stolen password, a stolen fingerprint cannot be replaced. Beyond technical risks, centralised IDs enable profiling: deciding who belongs and who can be excluded.

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Myth or Reality?



For marginalised groups, the stakes are higher. An error in the system or a discriminatory policy tied to the ID can mean exclusion from essential services. And while digital safety campaigns often stress personal responsibility such as stronger passwords, cautious clicks, these do little against structural vulnerabilities embedded in ID systems.

Are digital IDs simply modern infrastructure, or are they quiet enablers of state overreach? Right now, they are both. They streamline services, but they also deepen the state's reach into private life. Without safeguards and accountability, efficiency risks coming at the expense of freedom.