

Intelligent decisions or bureaucratic bungles? Taking charge of the future of planning in a digital world

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Planning as a professional occupation is not immune to 'digital disruption'. Consideration of autonomous vehicles, connected communities and other such concepts are slowly gaining momentum when planning the places of our future towns, cities and communities. The digital age will change the social fabric of our communities. In turn, it will disrupt the traditional design and planning models on which the profession has been historically built. The planning profession by its nature operates at the coalface of change. However, has the planning profession considered how the digital world will affect its own operation and future role? Will the planning professional go the same way as the switchboard operator? Artificial intelligence and the digital revolution is not limited to the production and manufacturing industries. There are already examples where artificial intelligence can replace service industries and professionals, actively taking on the roles of data collection, analysis and decision-making. Of note is the ability for these digital systems to learn. At what point, will the digital decision be more accurate and efficient than the human planner of today? Perhaps this threat to the profession presents an opportunity for the freedom to think, advocate and create by the removal of repetitive tasks and inconsistent decision-making. This presentation seeks to ask how the role of the planning professional might be affected by 'digital disruption'. It will explore the opportunities that early adoption and positioning presents to the planning profession.