Innovation, and technological innovation in particular, can help city governments to meet the challenges of urban governance, to improve urban environments, to become more competitive and to address sustainability concerns. To prevent and manage these challenges, cities need to operate in an innovative way. In this context, the smart city approach is emerging as a way of solving tangled and wicked problems.

However, the concept of smart city is still a fuzzy one, not well defined in theoretical researches nor in empirical projects. In this respect, several definitions, different from each other, have been proposed. Despite the dissimilarities, all agree on the fact that a smart city is an urban space that tends to improve the daily life (work, school,...) of its citizens (broadly defined). This is an improvement from different points of view: social, political, economic, governmental,... Finally, although smart cities are based on ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), people (with their knowledge, habits, experiences, culture and behavior) remain at the heart of concerns. In this context, the Smart Cities and Smart Governments mini track aims at exploring what a smart city is and how a smart city is built and, therefore, at enlarging the still limited theoretical body around the concept of smart cities.

This mini track focuses on the interactions between citizens, government, and technology to promote, facilitate, and create smart cities. The six papers that contains represent different methodologies, theories, conceptualizations, and assessments of smart cities. Together, they offer a platform for discussion of emerging and innovative research in this subject.

The first three papers are more conceptual and dig in the understanding of what a smart city is and in its different dimensions. In the first one, “Triple Helix in Smart Cities: A Literature Review about the Vision of Public Bodies, Universities, and Private Companies”, Renata Paola Dameri, Elsa Negre, and Camille Rosenthal-Sabroux argue that the smart city success depends on the synergic action by the triple helix key actors: public bodies, universities, and private companies. However, not ever these actors share the same smart city vision. In their paper, the authors aim at individuating similarities and differences in key actors’ smart city vision, by a large and deep literature review on both scientific papers and practitioner or institutional reports.

In the second paper, “Smart Governance: A Cross-case Analysis of Smart City Initiatives”, Suha Alawadhi and Hans J. Scholl investigate and document the governance models that emerged in four recent smart city initiatives (Seattle and the eCityGov Alliance in the United States, Munich in Germany, and Turin in Italy). The authors argue that reshaping administrative structures and processes across multiple local government agencies and departments appears as an important prerequisite to success in these initiatives. Moreover, the model of governance in such multi-agency initiatives (the “smart governance” according to the authors) is key to achieving desired outcomes and sustainability. However, those models vary from one case to another depending on a number of factors. Of particular importance is the decision-making processes and the specific methods of conflict resolution.

The third paper, “What Makes a City Smart? Lessons from Barcelona”, presents Barcelona (Spain)’s strategy to become a smart city. Mila Gascó, its author, argues that different cities around the world are following different strategies in order to become smarter. There is no one road to becoming smart and different cities have adopted different approaches that reflect their particular circumstances. The author analyzes and discusses the case of Barcelona, which has repeatedly been considered among the top smart cities in the world, using an eight-dimension model that shows that smart cities are more than technology and that policy, management and organization, and people and communities are dimensions that specially matter when developing a smart city strategy.
The second set of papers pay attention to a specific aspect of the debate around smart cities. In their paper, “Managing a Smart City’s Resilience to Ebola: An Ontological Framework”, Matthew Liotine, Arkalgud Ramaprasad, and Thant Syn focus on the importance of managing information in smart cities. They argue that the city’s approach has to be systemic and systematic; it cannot be fragmented and incremental. However, several cases show the difficulty of marshaling an effective response. In this context, the authors present an ontological framework to logically deconstruct the complexity of a smart city’s resilience when it encounters novel threats and illustrate the application of the framework to planning and assessment with examples from a United States county’s recent response to Ebola.

The fifth paper, “Smart Cities and Transparency. Does Smartness Influence Transparency?” by Maria Cucciniello, Nicola Bellé, Greta Nasi, and Marco Mena, investigates if the smartness of a city is associated with a higher level of transparency. In particular, the authors assess whether greater levels of digital smartness are associated with higher levels of transparency. The analysis focuses on Italian municipalities and the findings show that greater levels of digital smartness are actually associated with a higher level of transparency. This points to some interesting implications, especially in terms of improving confidence in government and reducing corruption.

Finally, the last paper, “Towards the Construction of Smart City Index for Analytics (SM-CIA): Pilot-Testing with Major Cities in China Using Publicly Available Data”, proposes the construction of an index, the so-called Smart City Index for Analytics (SM-CIA), to objectively measure the degree of smartness in urban cities in six domain areas. The authors, Yin-Leng Theng, Xuexin Xu, and Kanokkorn Witedwittayanusat, apply it on major cities in China, finding a significant increasing trend in the smart living, mobility, economy and governance dimensions. As they state, their results can be considered as important input for the development of a global smart city index.