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November 17, 2020 11:00 am - 1:00  
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11:00am

Data is Essential for Urban Mobility: It Must be Created  
Sarah Williams  
Associate Professor of Technology and Urban Planning  
Chair, Urban Science & Computer Science Program  
MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning



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Associate Professor of Technology and Urban Planning  
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Sarah Williams is currently an Associate Professor of Technology and Urban Planning. She also is Director of the Civic Data Design Lab at MIT's School of Architecture and Planning. The Civic Data Design Lab works with data, maps, and mobile technologies to develop interactive design and communication strategies that expose urban policy issues to broader audiences.

Trained as a Geographer (Clark University), Landscape Architect (University of Pennsylvania), and Urban Planner (MIT), Williams's work combines geographic analysis and design. Williams is most well known for her work as part of the Million Dollar Blocks team which highlighted the cost of incarceration, Digital Matatus which developed the first data set on an informal transit system searchable in Google Maps, and a more recent project that uses social media data to understand housing vacancy and Ghost Cities in China.

Williams' design work has been widely exhibited including work in the Guggenheim, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York City. Prior to MIT, she was Co-Director of the Spatial Information Design Lab at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation (GSAPP). Williams has won numerous awards including being named top 25 planners in the technology and 2012 Game Changer by Metropolis Magazine. Her work is currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Seoul Biennale Cities Exhibition in Korea.

[View full bio](#)

The majority of the world's population use informal or semi-formal transit systems as their primary form of mobility. Whether they are called matatus, dalalas, minibus, taxis, colectivos, diablos rojos, micros, jeepneys; these systems fill gaps in transit coverage, offering mobility and access, especially for the poor. However, lack of data on these informal transit systems creates barriers to integrated planning essential to realizing the full value of infrastructure investments, including links to Bus Rapid Transit or Commuter Rail. Now new forms of data collection tools exist offering opportunities to create this missing public transport data. In this talk Williams' will describe her work developing tools to capture this data in Nairobi and how the project inspired cities all over the world to create a worldwide network for the development of transit data on semi-formal and informal systems, with headquarters in African and Latin America.

12:00pm

The Global Rise of Platform Firms in Urban Mobility Markets

Jason Jackson

Assistant Professor of Political Economy and Urban Planning, [Department of Urban Studies and Planning](#)



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Assistant Professor of Political Economy and Urban Planning  
[Department of Urban Studies and Planning](#)

Jason Jackson is Assistant Professor of Political Economy in the [Department of Urban Studies and Planning](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he was a member of the [Task Force on Work of the Future](#).

Jason's [research](#) is broadly concerned with the relationship between states and markets. It assesses the implications of political struggles between business, government and societal actors for the structure of market institutions and resulting competitive and distributional outcomes. His work is especially concerned with the role of technology in social transformation. Jason is currently writing in two main areas, the role of anti-colonial economic nationalism in development and the rise of the digital economy.

Jason completed his Ph.D. in Political Economy at MIT. He also holds an AB in Economics from Princeton University, an MSc in Development Economics from the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School.

This talk will focus on the global emergence of digitally-enabled ridehailing platform firms in urban mobility markets. Ridehailing firms such as Uber, and their global counterparts such as Bolt, Grab, Ola, Taxify and 99 exemplify the rise of the 'gig economy' through the use of digital technologies to reorganize work processes and reorder markets. Observers have highlighted the range of implications of on-demand work from productivity to precarity. Yet most research has focused on industrialized country while markets in the Global South remain neglected. In developing countries, high levels of unemployment and underemployment are the labor market norm and informality is pervasive. What are the implications for 'Uberization' in the South? This talk explores this variation in effects and outcomes on markets and workers by contrasting the effects of the rise of ridehailing firms in industrialized country cities such as Boston and New York with those in developing country contexts such as Bangkok, Dar es Salaam and Sao Paulo.