# A Philosophical Investigation into African Conceptions of Personhood in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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**Abstract :** Cities have become testbeds for automation and experimenting with artificial intelligence (AI) in managing urban services and public spaces. Smart Cities and AI systems are changing most human experiences from health and education to personal relations. For instance, in healthcare, social robots are being implemented as tools to assist patients. Similarly, in education, social robots are being used as tutors or co-learners to promote cognitive and affective outcomes. With that general picture in mind, one can now ask a further question about Smart Cities and artificial agents and their moral standing in the African context of personhood. There has been a wealth of literature on the topic of personhood; however, there is an absence of literature on African personhood in highly automated environments. Personhood in African philosophy is defined by the role one can and should play in the community. However, in today's technologically advanced world, a risk is that machines become more capable of accomplishing tasks that humans would otherwise do. Further, on many African communitarian accounts, personhood and moral standing are associated with active relationality with the community. However, in the Smart City, human closeness is gradually diminishing. For instance, humans already do engage and identify with robotic entities, sometimes even romantically. The primary aim of this study is to investigate how African conceptions of personhood and community interact in a highly automated environment such as Smart Cities. Accordingly, this study lies in presenting a rarely discussed African perspective that emphasizes the necessity and the importance of relationality in handling Smart Cities and AI ethically. Thus, the proposed approach can be seen as the sub-Saharan African contribution to personhood and the growing AI debates, which takes the reality of the interconnectedness of society seriously. And it will also open up new opportunities to tackle old problems and use existing resources to confront new problems in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
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