

# **A CITY WITHOUT PEOPLE IS NOT AN URBAN LABORATORY**

*Posted on 15/05/2012 by Naider*

A few months ago I dedicated a few paragraphs to what at that time was just a project in its early stages: a [urban laboratory without peoples](#) in the middle of the New Mexico desert. Among other things, we have already seen that these mega-scenarios are not unknown in history. Now we know a little more and it is uncritically celebrated again in the media and social networks, which echo this initiative. At that time, in the absence of more details, it already seemed an idea far removed from how **technological research** should be focused in order to succeed in designing new urban services that really respond to the needs of life in the city. Now we have a little more detail. This city without inhabitants will be called the Center for Innovation Testing and Evaluation and will be [presents](#) like this:

*The Center for Innovation, Testing and Evaluation (CITE) will be the first of its kind, in scale and scope, fully integrated test, evaluation and certification facility dedicated to enabling and facilitating the commercialization of new and emerging technologies.*

*CITE will be modeled after a mid-sized modern American city, integrating real-world urban and suburban environments along with all the typical working infrastructure elements that make up today's cities. This will provide customers the unique opportunity to test and evaluate technologies in conditions that most closely simulate real-world applications.*



Driven by the **Pegasus** holding, this city will offer a testing framework for a series of technologies that can be tested in an aseptic environment without interference from citizens, users, setbacks or unexpected events. With such a limited research framework, it became evident that only a series of technologies would make sense to be tested here: intelligent transport systems, alternative energy generation, smart grids, telecommunication infrastructures, security, etc. During this time I have seen how even in forums where it was a question of promoting issues such as open innovation, this project was applauded as the latest great advance in the discourse of smart cities. But now, knowing the project in more detail, I'm still in the same.

The technologies that affect urban life go far beyond those mentioned. But even these, which have a large "hard" and apparently passive infrastructure component, will necessarily depend on the use made of them. We might think that they may need tests prior to use to adjust and analyze design and operational issues. However, **shouldn't this "going out" be anticipated as much as possible?** It is another very different methodological framework from the **living lab**, for example, which broadly seeks to bring the conceptualization and design phases closer to real conditions in which the users of these technologies are the [protagonists](#).

The [facilities](#), however, appeal to its size environment as the ideal scenario in which to test technologies that are intended to be implemented later in the typical typology of North American cities (in fact, in its design they wanted to replicate the city of Rock Hill in South Carolina), using CITE as an urban laboratory to simulate scenarios and collect test data in a **zero interaction environment** with users. Possibly, having aseptic laboratory conditions in an apparent urban context (actually, think about it, building a city is just a **scenario that works as a claim**) may be of some use to researchers and companies that want to implement this type of technology with prior tests on the ground (and ground is not the same as street), but the relevance of these tests, it seems, will be very limited as long as they do not face **actual conditions of use**. We cannot get too confused if we really want to get it right when it comes to deploying **sufficient, necessary and nearby technology in the city**.

**There are no comments yet.**