

# SENTIENT CITY. THE FUTURE OF URBAN SPACE

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Another reference book if you are into smart cities and collateral issues and don't know where to start. If a few weeks ago it was the turn, finally, to talk about [Everyware](#), by Adam Greenfield, today is this novelty, published a few months ago by MIT Press and edited by [Mark Shepard](#) (I discovered Shepard's clue with [Situated Technologies Pamphlets](#), which I recommend). [Sentient City. Ubiquitous computing, architecture and the future of urban space](#) is a collection of contributions from different authors on two levels:

- **Case studies** developed for the organized [exhibition](#) in 2009 and titled [Toward the Sentient City](#) organized by the [Architectural League of New York](#), from which some of the exhibited works were selected to be explained in greater detail in this book, works involving such big names as [Natalie Jeremijenko](#), [Usman Haque](#), [Anthony Townsend](#) or [Laura Forlano](#). (*By the way, Pablo just published a longer review and you can find a more detailed description of these examples in his [post](#)*).
- **Theoretical and academic essays related to the topic, written by authors who are a reference in these topics. In fact, in most cases, these authors are of great relevance today and are some of the traces that I follow to keep up to date on these issues, mainly due to their critical and complex vision beyond the superficial celebration that there is today about the relationship between technology and cities.**



On the practical case side, we can find well-known projects such as [Trash Track](#) (the one we talked about [a while ago](#)), [Too Smart City](#) or [Breakout!](#), which they explore, along with the other cases, some hypotheses about the potential use of digital technologies in its broadest sense and its impact on social life in cities, its limitations and its ability to amplify citizen knowledge about the impact of life in the city. As we live in a time that makes us have the false feeling that everything is new, it seems that this relationship is new or, at least, it does not make us forget previous reflections. So, in the foreword, Shepard precisely frames all of this from the perspective of the exhibition [Living City](#) from [Archigram](#) in the 60. After all, urban utopias have always been in charge of distracting us from reality, breaking their promises on most occasions, becoming mere diversionary maneuvers. Now we can simply reflect them in fabulous renders.

On the side of theoretical essays, the conceptual density is greater, and sometimes it is excessively academic, with common references to Gilles Deleuze, Marshall McLuhan, Bruno Latour or Henri Lefebvre, a sign of the depth charge behind a critical question to be resolved. the dilemmas of public space, the physical construction of the city and power relations. And here, once again, we find key names in current thinking about ubiquitous computing, networks, the sphere of public objects, etc.: Keller Easterling, Dan Hill, Saskia Sassen, Martijn de Wall, Kazys Varnelis or Matthew Fuller sign some of these essays. The sum of its different sensibilities and approaches (sociological, technological, artistic, design, architecture,...) is what gives meaning to the book as a balanced vision. Martijn de Waall explains it perfectly:

*At certain points in the history of architecture and urban planning, the internal debate on how to apply new technologies exceeds the boundaries of the discipline. At those times, the hopes and fears found in the disputes between architects, policy makers, engineers and planners are extended to a broader discussion about urban and societal change. Then, the central issue is not merely how to solve a specific spatial problem with the help of new technology. Rather, the debate starts to revolve around its possible impact on urban society at large. What does this new technology mean for urban culture, what impact does it have on how we shape our identities and live together in the city? When those questions emerge, Dutch philosopher René Boomkens argues, the professional debate has turned 'philosophical'.*

A concern, finally, that of the relationship between technological development and urban development that is by no means new. The [urban future](#) has always been a good place to experiment and think in new concepts. Today, when the world has become "medium-urban", the temptation to think about the future of cities is still present and the book is a good example of how we need to add perspectives to broaden our vision.

On the same topic:

- [Everyware, the technology that is already here and everywhere](#)
- [Everyday scenes in a smart city](#)
- [City intelligence is on the streets](#)
- [Smart City. Emerging technologies for urban functioning](#)
- = "no opener" > From the sustainable city to the smart city. Don't lose perspective
- [Smart City. Beyond smart energy management and digital technologies](#)
- [Smart city. Business commercial strategy and branding of new urban developments](#)
- [Smart City as mobilization of local technological capacities and industrial opportunities](#)
- [Smart city. Political and social implications](#)
- [Where we are, where we are going and how far to trust urban technologies](#)
- [Urban laboratories without people. From the German Quarter in Utah to the Smart City in New Mexico](#)

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