

THE CIVIC VALUE OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS

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As this is the first edition of [URBAPPS](https://naider.com/blog/manu-fernandez/urbapps-applications-m%C3%B3viles-to-improve-the-city), we want to start openly and surely in later sessions we can focus more (on topics and technologies), but always working on applications for the **sustainability** of the city in broad terms. It is about addressing the civic mobilization capacity that mobile device users have when it comes to influencing the identification of urban problems, sharing experiences, citizen control of public

data, generating collective solutions, etc.

In the book [From social butterfly to engaged citizen](#), [Kurt Iveson](#) publishes an article titled "[Mobile media and the strategies of urban citizenship: discipline, responsibility, politicisation](#)" that marks some keys to link mobile devices in processes of real citizen engagement beyond the danger of assigning the citizen a mere information gatherer. It is a key point so that the mobile applications that can be created have a sense of change. It is one more point in favor of understanding this URBAPPS process as a simple exercise of sharing technical capabilities for mobile development:

"(...)different applications of social and mobile media technologies will have different impacts on urban life, depending on the model of governance and states of citizenship they embody".

The apps become one more way to break the traditional model of institutional intermediation of the citizen, which now expands their ability to intervene and [hack the government](#) to create collective solutions outside of traditional circuits. It arises like this, we have the possibility of giving a [citizen orientation](#) to the predominant discourse on the role of technology in the city. In [Ownership in the hybrid city](#), a highly recommended document by [Michiel de Lange](#) and [Martijn de Waal](http://www.martijndewaal.nl/), co-founders of [The Mobile City](#), we find keys to give a sense of citizen ownership to digital technological possibilities in the design of services and digital tools, a change of perspective based on three pillars: the city as a platform for data that should be collectively "owned", digital media as instruments of collective action, co-creation and self-organization and the ability to add more actors and public to issues of public interest.

With this perspective we open with [URBAPPS](#) three main lines in which it is easier right now to add capacity of incidence, data availability and proximity to the day-to-day life of the city to create ad hoc digital tools for urban intervention:

+GREEN

Applications that contribute to building more sustainable cities in relation to problems such as air and water quality, the use of natural resources, noise, the availability of green spaces or incidents on public roads. Surely this last theme is the one that has seen more popular apps and websites such as [Fix My Street](#), [Repara Ciudad](#), [Street Bump](#) or [Fix My Street](#), but there is life far beyond. A few days ago I found out that the United States Environment Agency launched a contest in 2011 for the development of #greenapps, [Apps for the Environment](#), and the [possibilities](#) are almost inexhaustible.

MOVE!

Applications that improve the accessibility of the city and specifically related to mobility, intermodality, public transport, access for people with reduced mobility, alternative modes of transport, pedestrian areas, etc. From apps to facilitate parking [parking](#), to the full range of real-time tracking systems from [public transport](#) (possibly the area of public services where Administrations have been most involved so far).

Applications that help to generate relationships between the people who live in a city and improve it in some of its dimensions. We will use this category as a more open field in which issues that facilitate life in the city can enter for issues of collective organization, leisure, legibility of the city, economy, sharing of communication infrastructures, etc.

The possibilities are endless. June 9 is about creating the framework to promote the development of applications of this type, learning from different backgrounds and knowledge and understanding the necessary context so that the apps can have a real impact and viability, issues that are not a programming problem . As **Usman Haque** said in [Surely there's a smarter approach to smart cities?:](#)

We, citizens, create and recreate our cities with every step we take, every conversation we have, every nod to a neighbour, every space we inhabit, every structure we erect, every transaction we make. A smart city should help us increase these serendipitous connections. It should actively and consciously enable us to contribute to data-making (rather than being mere consumers of it), and encourage us to make far better use of data that's already around us.

You can also read:

- [Book. From social butterfly to engaged citizen](#)
- [Sentient City. The future of urban space](#)
- [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](#)
- [="noopener">From the sustainable city to the smart city. Don't lose perspective](#)
- [Smart city. Political and social implications](#)

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