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Grazia Concilio and Francesca Rizzo (eds.), *Human Smart Cities - Rethinking the Interplay between Design and Planning*. Urban and Landscape Perspectives, Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2016; 255 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-33022-8 (Hardcover)

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I began this review by typing ‘smart city’ into a popular search engine. I received an impressive number of approximately 32 million entry results, some of which were definitions, while others were links to urban regions that are currently developing the multiple vectors that urban smartness entails. The ‘smart city’ is to many spatial planners and place managers yet another catchphrase that has outlived its usefulness. For example, Haarstad (2016) argues that the smart city appears to be a textbook example of an empty signifier in urban planning, a concept virtually void of any substantive meaning. Dameri and Rosenthal-Sabroux (2014) comment that there is no precise definition of the term, while a handful of urban thinkers have been developing thoughts on how disruptive the smart city movement truly is (e.g. Batty, 2016). From the literature, there appears to be three main vectors of usage related to the smart city: one that stresses the use of information and communication technologies in the emerging global urban system (e.g. Arribas-Bel et al, 2015), a second one focused on its technological determinism (e.g. Calzada and Cobo, 2015) and another that stresses innovation, creativity and cross-sectorial cooperation in urban governance (e.g. Kitchin, 2014). This book focuses on the later.

The book provides a comprehensive account of the topic of smart cities as a human-driven approach for supporting urban transformation. The editors, Grazia Concilio (Politecnico di Milano) and Francesca Rizzo (University of Bologna) highlight that the concept of a smart city boosted the relation between design and urban planning. The book steers clear of the current discourse that positions smart cities solely as the application of technology in urban environments by emphasizing the idea that the “harmonious development of contemporary cities must be based on the capability to design and manage the interaction between their traditional physical structure and the new digital information infrastructure” (page vi). Such an approach renders the book useful reading for spatial planners, policy makers and place managers that are more concerned with a search for answers to questions such as, what does it mean for citizens living, working and playing in a smart city?

The book is composed of four parts comprising 15 chapters. A total of 19 authors share both theoretical insights and empirical work that greatly contribute to bridging the gap

between design and planning, in light of the development and expansion of smart city policies. The microscale of the cases studies involved kept me captivated by the chapters throughout the book.

Part I, titled “Needs for New Durable Visions,” reinforces the strategic importance of envisioning processes for city-making. For example, Chapter 2 considers urban planning as an entire set of transformative practices and explores the primary potentials of Urban Living Labs. Chapter 3, in an interrogatory algebraic manner (i.e., smart cities + smart citizens = civic intelligence?), employs the concepts of civic intelligence and smart cities to determine the value of smart citizens. Several poignant statements on the role of citizens in design and planning can be drawn from this chapter. I agree with the author about the statement that only with strong, engaged citizens we will be able to address the ongoing urban challenges.

Part II of the book, “Complex Participatory Design Processes” will be particularly inspiring to urban planners and city-makers. It is appealing in terms of presenting an overview of the evolution of the relationships between design and the city (Chapter 4). Following on, a discussion is presented regarding a new wave of design projects that have been developed for addressing the challenges that are active in urban regions (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 is primarily dedicated to discussing spatial planning and design citizenship. Some examples of situated platforms for design citizenship such as community gardens, solar energy coops, self-build co-housing, neighbourhood time-banking schemes and localized food networks are provided. This is the empirical evidence that the smart city agenda needs in order to evolve towards a more social and humanized stance.

Part III, “Innovating Governance and Economic Models”, entails four contributions to the overall discussion this book aims to highlight. For example, Chapter 10 focuses on the need for a new civic economy model and discusses first the causes and conditions of urban imbalance in Europe. This chapter touches on the role of cities within the European Union and the growing challenges faced by cities suffering from shrinkage and economic decline.

Part IV, “Experiences”, begins by presenting the Human Smart Cities Manifesto, launched during the Forum for Public Administrations in Rome in June 2013 (Chapter 11). Then, for instance, Chapter 14 presents an interesting example of conflicts that can emerge while conducting urban planning through projects. This chapter presents the instance of a major urban regeneration project called ‘The Sustainability Park’. The chapter demonstrates that as soon as the project became public, primarily through the media, citizens protested about the fact that they had not been given the opportunity to participate in the proposal’s design, nor had they been informed of the project’s existence.

The book ends with an afterword written by Charles Landry. Landry calls for more creative city-making by presenting its assumptions, aims and challenges. Although I agree with the author that urban planning needs to recognise “the power of creativity and imagination” (page 241), I concur with Deserti (Chapter 4 of this book) about the idea that creative city-making may be primarily aimed at supporting real estate operations and market agents, where the increasing cost of buildings leads to gentrification and social exclusion. By stating this, I acknowledge that there is a strong need to keep researching the real impacts of the smart city concept in cities as a means for supporting urban transformation. I agree with the “humanitarian” outlook postulated in this book; however, empirical evidence is required to confront the theoretical ideals of the smart city and creative city-making with its impacts for city-dwellers at the ground-level.

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