

The Smart City

Sociology

What sensor-led urban governance promises, and what sociologists ask of it.

The promise

- Real-time data on flows and demand
- Services targeted where they are needed
- Energy and transport optimised
- Faults found before they are reported
- Transparency through open data

The questions

- Who owns the data, and on what terms
- Sensors miss those who are not sensed
- Optimising for measurable goals only
- Vendor lock-in shapes long-term policy
- Surveillance falls unevenly by area
- Consent is not obtainable in public space

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Evidence of measurable citywide benefit is thin so far; most published gains come from vendor pilots.

Educational reference. Technological solutionism describes framing political problems as engineering ones; the debate is unsettled.