

# Book review

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I wanted to review this book because of my training as a city planner and was interested in understanding the future directions for my profession. Although it only touched on this topic, it opened my mind as to the complex issues not only facing the city planners of today, but much more importantly, the very complex issues facing them and society in the future. The book is based on the insights of two urban planning consultants and was developed from three previous books (Future City, 2009; The Safe City, 2013; Digital Defence, 2015) and from their recent experiences of developing the smart city concept for Arlington, in the USA. As Arlington, is located just outside Washington DC, the book presents a picture of what can be achieved when a national government supports future proofing of urban planning activities. Given the continuing growth of the world's population, and the resulting expansion of cities, the publication of this book is fortuitous.

The aim of the book is to “present a rough guide to what is meant by a smart city – today and tomorrow” and urges urban planners not to fall into the trap of “thinking that the way forward is throwing technology at ever demanding problems”. In 14 chapters this book explores the methods and tools used to create and develop a smart city, through an exploration of not only cybersecurity issues and the need for new intelligent infrastructures, but also the administrative, legal and regularity systems needed to both support the smart city, and to prevent the misuse of technology. It concludes with a very useful 30-page glossary of the terms and

acronyms used in the book (from Adware to Zombie Computers). This glossary will prove very useful to the non-technical reader and could be used as a stand-alone document.

This book is not written in the usual tourism futures style, with grand ideas, speculative insights and extensive listing of academic references to support some vague conclusions, indeed there is no mention at all of tourism in the whole book. The authors are very clear on the practical issues facing smart cities, and caution against the adoption of quick technological solutions to complex social problems. The book is unusual in that author's do not make extensive use of academic articles from learned journals to support their arguments, but instead draw from their wide-ranging knowledge of published reports by consultants, government and commercial research institutes, and from articles in respected newspapers, such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Thereby, giving the book a feel that it has been developed from real world experiences of complex issues, rather than unsupported academic speculations.

Often with books written by more than author, the quality of individual chapters can vary and sometimes do not flow together to develop a well-argued and cohesive discussion, this could not be said of this book. Although it is written by two authors, it is clear that they have worked together in the past, as it is not possible to distinguish which author wrote which chapter.

As for criticisms of the book, they are relatively small. Exploring smart cities from a narrow technology and cyber security focus, rather incorporating a wider humanity and sustainability focus, suggests a somewhat conventional approach to the study of smart cities, which fails to reflect the wider debate on smart tourism. However, the book's technology and cyber security focus, does reflect the author's real-life experience of working closely with one city, which is home to a number of USA national security agencies. While the

## **Smart Cities of Today and Tomorrow: Better Technology, Infrastructures and Society**

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authors did try to draw examples from other countries, as this book has a strong American focus, some of the conclusions may not be applicable to other countries. Also, repeating key messages a number of times throughout the book, such as: “the internet of things will develop into the internet of everything” or “suburban sprawl is bad, urban density is good, but super density is bad again” was annoying. However, by the end of the book I understood the important messages the authors were trying to make, and perhaps such repetitive actions did help to reinforce my understanding of their key messages.

The author’s mission statement for the book was to make the topic “interesting, informative, exciting, and perhaps even occasionally amusing”, and they achieved this goal. Although the chapters can be read by themselves, the reader would be doing a disservice if this is how they read the book. Like a good meal, where the all individual food items are excellent, it is the consumption of the whole that gives pleasure to the total experience. So, it is with this book, it is best read as a whole, so one can experience and understand the rationale for the key messages outlined in the book.

Finally, in terms of a recommendation to buy the book or not. This is not the usual tourism futures book familiar to readers of this journal,

but the book will prove useful to readers who want to explore tourism futures from a wider and different perspective. While it would be difficult to describe the book as essential reading to better understand tourism futures, the insights it provides into the future of smart cities are thoughtful, interesting, challenging, worrying and frightful, and perhaps this is what all good books about futures should set out to achieve? As for the city planners of tomorrow, this book highlights the crucial role they will play in developing safer and workable cities.

In conclusion, this book should be of interest to a number of markets, from: general interested informed readers, urban planners, city politicians and central government decision makers. It should also be read by tourism futurists, for in the not too distant future, some 80 per cent of the world’s population will live in cities. Futurists will need to better understand not only the issues facing society in such cities, but the effects and counter effects of different policy actions in creating smart cities, and their subsequent impacts on tourists who visit such cities.

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