



# Against the smart city (The city is here for you to use Book 1)

By Adam Greenfield

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\*Named one of Verso's Best Books of 2013!\*

From the smartphones in our pockets and the cameras on the lampposts to sensors in the sewers, the sidewalks and the bike-sharing stations, the contemporary city is permeated with networked information technology.

As promoted by enterprises like IBM, Siemens and Cisco Systems, the vision of the "smart city" proposes that this technology can be harnessed by municipal administrators to achieve unprecedented levels of efficiency, security, convenience and sustainability. But a closer look at what this body of ideas actually consists of suggests that such a city will not, and cannot, serve the interests of the people who live in it.

In this pamphlet, *Everyware* author Adam Greenfield explores the ways in which this discourse treats the city as an abstraction, misunderstands (or even undermines) the processes that truly do generate meaning and value — and winds up making many of the same blunders that doomed the High Modernist urban planning of the twentieth century. "Against the smart city" provides an intellectual toolkit for those of us interested in resisting this sterile and unappealing vision, and lays important groundwork for the far more fruitful alternatives to come.

PRAISE FOR "AGAINST THE SMART CITY":

"Adam Greenfield does for 'urban renewal' in the twenty-first century what Jane Jacobs did for it in the twentieth."

- Ian Bogost, Ivan Allen College Distinguished Chair in Media Studies and Professor of Interactive Computing, Georgia Institute of Technology.

"A critical inquiry into the constrained reality of the smart city and its free-floating narratives. Adam Greenfield's vast knowledge about the subject allows him to pinpoint the extreme moment where 'the ideology of the smart city finds its purest expression.' A great piece of analysis, a sharp exegesis — and great

writing."

- Saskia Sassen, Columbia University, author of *The Global City*.

"For those who believe technology's finest, most broadly-empowering urban applications have not yet been deployed, this book is for you. It is less 'against' the dominant smart city narrative than a foundation for what we might yet assemble from the parts and pieces that remain after Greenfield's done deconstructing it."

- John Tolva, Chief Technology Officer, City of Chicago.

"Adam cuts the smart city marketing game to the quick. He reminds us, like the great urbanists before him, that cities are about people — people who shape their city from the bottom up with their character, agency, independence and yes, intelligence."

- Benjamin de la Peña, The Rockefeller Foundation.

"A cogent debunking of the smart city. Adam Greenfield breaks down the term with wit and clarity, exposing that the smart city may be neither very smart nor very city at all. An insightful, timely and refreshing read that will make you rethink the city of tomorrow."

- J. Meejin Yoon, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, architect and designer.

"Every 'Smart City' advocate in the world should read this short book. Read it now, before people show up at the City Council and start quoting it."

- Bruce Sterling, author of *Shaping Things*.

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