

Sandra Baer from CIVIQ Smartscapes: How Smart Cities are Disrupting Urban Spaces

From New York City to London and Singapore, [CIVIQ](#) has deployed over 2,000 installations, connecting over 2 million people in 13 cities. This gives them unrivaled insight into what's happening with smart cities worldwide and how technology innovation can reshape urban living and improve the way we connect to people, places, and experiences.

We sat down with Sandra Baer, CIVIQ's CMO and acclaimed smart cities speaker, to talk about current trends in the industry.



What are the most significant smart city trends that you expect to see grow in 2018?

There are five main areas which cities are concentrating on when they're building out smart city proposals:

- **Advertising:** this is an opportunity to bring additional revenue into the city; even more there's the potential to improve the city's well-being through ad campaigns that communicate events, concerts, city gatherings, and a host of city activities that showcase the fun of city living.
- **Safety and security:** during extreme weather, terrorist acts, or other major disruptions or disasters, cities can clearly alert the community about what's going on with authoritative messages from the police or other first responders.
- **Transportation:** every city has parking and traffic problems and smart signage can help divert traffic to underused parking spots or routes and make public transportation more accessible. Great wayfinding improves mobility for people, goods and services as they flow across a community.
- **Economic growth:** smart infrastructure can stimulate local economies by becoming "hyper-local." The best smart city signage supports local businesses, communicates job opportunities,

shares information about education options—all designed to attract new business, talent and resources—in the spirit of making the city an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

- **Social inclusion:** this is a chance to involve urban populations in decision-making and start to build community cohesion. The savvy city leaders understand the need to listen to “all of the voices” and [create digital equity across a community](#).

How do you see this disrupting the way cities work?

I see three ways in which [cities will evolve in next few years](#).

One of the most exciting aspects of smart city innovation is the transformation that will shape how cities communicate. At the moment, many cities are still stuck in a broadcast model, where the administration pushes out communications through print or digital means, but the residents have a limited ability to engage in discussion.

With smart city installations, street-level interaction enables city leaders to ask questions and gain actionable feedback from their constituents. Through interactive WayPoints, residents could send their ideas back to the city; they can “vote” and express their opinion about upcoming city decisions. So if a city was planning on building a new bridge or supporting a new development, residents could see the plan on the kiosk and interact with the screens to pick their favorite design or rate their preferences for city investments.

There is also a lot of potential for smart city technology to enable a more cohesive and attractive community identity. The city that thinks about its character and brand image, is one that understands the importance of how it is perceived by the world. Porto, Portugal is a great example—the city hired a design team to use the beautiful “azulejo” tiles as a symbol of their history and culture, showing as a modern city with a “hip” new look. Hamburg, Germany is another example of smart city branding—the city identified 12 attributes that make Hamburg a great place. From its history to the beautiful location to festivals and sport events to its international vibe, Hamburg knows how to promote and deliver a great city experience.

Digital signage and street-level kiosks can be an important focal point for building this identity, particularly as cities become more autonomous and connected to their communities.

In terms of tourism, there’s a lot of opportunities to capitalize on space in airports, train stations, and city entry points to build excitement about the city, its events, and activities. For example, as visitors land at London airports, they can immediately see what’s happening—cultural attractions, shows or seasonal events. It’s a chance to start building a distinctive brand in the minds of visitors from the minute they step off the plane.

Another important trend is going to be hyper-localization of data. Up to 80% of a city’s economy comes from small businesses, and smart signage offers a way to highlight a city’s unique local businesses and help visitors make memorable discoveries.

In a lot of ways, smart city interfaces offer a way to bridge the physical world with the digital world, by offering new and engaging experiences that direct people to helpful or interesting resources—experiences that improve the way they move across the city and engage with their environment.

This sounds exciting—are there any campaigns that stand out to you?

I've seen two DOOH campaigns at the Westfield Shopping Centre in London which were tremendously powerful. The [Women's Aid installation](#) campaign focused on domestic violence—the screens showed a woman's bruised face and attention-tracking sensors "saw" the viewer looking at the image and see the bruises disappear. "Look at me" was intended to raise awareness and engage people to pay attention to the issue of domestic abuse.

Another [campaign was by Battersea Dogs Home](#), a charity which rescues and re-homes unwanted dogs and cats. They started by handing out leaflets to interested passersby, which had an RFID chip in it. Hidden sensors were activated when people with the leaflet walked past, making the dog on the leaflet appear to follow them around various screens.

The innovative technologies that support digital signage are just beginning to inspire us and connect us to our cities, to experiences and to each other in exciting new ways. The future is here now.

You can connect with Sandra on LinkedIn [here](#).

Read our case study about working with [CIVIQ on Link NYC](#).
