Inscribing a Square: Urban Data as Public Space – new book out

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After several months of work, we finally made it. The book on our last year’s Symposium, Sensing Place / Placing Sense has been published and is available from Springer.

In his 1965 movie Alphaville, Jean-Luc Godard takes us to a city regulated and controlled by the omniscient computer “Alpha 60” based on principles of logic and reason. Allegedly, Godard originally intended to name his movie Tarzan versus IBM (Darke, 2005). As of 2012, this working title seems more pertinent than ever. The past year was marked by two big themes for cities and technology: first, the ubiquitous arrival of “smart city” solutions, peddled by companies such as IBM and CISCO to municipal governments in order to upgrade and optimize their urban infrastructure through information technology. Second, the success of civic protests and disobedience, coordinated bottom-up through social media—the “Arab Spring,” Wikileaks, the Spanish May 15 or the American Occupy movements, just to name a few.

This is a book about how information shapes the city: its sensory experience, its infrastructures and its places. We are interested in the ways different groups use urban information to make sense of public spaces and change them. Therefore, two processes are of special interest:

1. Sensing Place. The role of urban data as a public good in a context where cities are increasingly instrumented with real-time sensor networks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction Dietmar Offenhuber, Katja Schechtner

SENSES

On Ambient Information Malcolm McCullough

Active Listening Sites Stadtmusik

SONIC VISTA — Re-Tuning Human Attention in Public Space, Listening to the Power of a City O+A Bruce Odland / Sam Auinger

On Infrastructure Legibility Dietmar Offenhuber

Tuneable Touch Ebru Kurbak

LightBridge: Embracing the Messiness, Exposing the Analytics Susanne Seitinger

Surviving in the Sentient City Mark Shepard in Conversation with Dietmar Offenhuber and Katja Schechtner

SYSTEMS

Taken Square: On the Hybrid Infrastructures of the #15M Movement Jose Luis de Vicente

iGeigie Safecast

Safecast Sean Bonner

On the Collection and Utilization of Human Mobility Data Katja Schechtner

Sense of Patterns Mahir M. Yavuz

Notes on the Design of Participatory Systems — For the City or for the Planet Usman Haque

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Inscribing a Square: Urban Data as Public Space – new book out

The Killer App for Technology-infused Cities isn’t Efficiency, it’s Sociability
Anthony Townsend in Conversation with Dietmar Offenhuber and Katja Schechtner

PLACES

Place Pulse MIT Media Lab

The Significance of Becoming Actors Sandrine von Klot

Kazamidori — Weathervane h.o

Top-Down/Bottom-Up Urbanism Nashid Nabian, Carlo Ratti

ZeitRaum Ars Electronica Futurelab

From Artifact to Artifice: The Mediatized Decomposition of Public Space Oliver Schürer

Los Ojos del Mundo MIT Senseable City Lab & Fabien Girardin

Here Now! Social Media and the Psychological City Sarah Williams