

### **The cities of the future**

What will our cities be like in the future? They will probably be smart cities that make use of technology to serve the people and the environment. Everything in a smart city will be 'connected' and 'interactive'. Information will be collected and sent out in order to improve public services and help people in their daily lives. Streetlights will be 'flexible', increasing or decreasing their glow based on pedestrian usage. Sensors will regulate traffic lights to prevent traffic jams. Someone looking for a place to park will be told where to find one. Waste collection companies will know how full containers are in real time. Weather sensors will automatically activate watering systems.

Nature will be an important part of these new cities, with the creation of parks, urban woods and urban farms. Another feature will be vertical foresting: buildings covered with vegetation, like the Bosco verticale in Milan, or the planned Forest-City, near Johor in Malaysia.

Connected citizens will play their part. They will be able to contribute to solving and improving the city's problems with data and ideas. As Sicinius says in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, set in the ancient metropolis of Rome: "What is the city but the people?"

There are several cities around the world already pursuing smart city projects, such as Amsterdam, Stockholm and Chicago. In the UK, several cities such as

London, Bristol and Milton Keynes are working on their smart city vision. Milton Keys, for example, is planning to provide the first public taxi service using self-driving vehicles.

With beautiful, eco-friendly architecture and the best and latest technology, there are also smart cities being planned from scratch. Songdo, South Korea, is designed so that all aspects of the city, from traffic to security are monitored from a central control station.

Masdar City in Abu Dhabi plans to be ecologically sustainable and to be a hub for cleantech companies. Another ambitious project is The New Orleans Arcology Habitat, or 'NOAH', a 1200-foot hurricane-proof floating city contained inside a single building.

Not everybody, though, is enthusiastic about these new projects. Some see these cities as sterile places where the citizens have no privacy because their actions are constantly monitored. One of these is Charles, the Prince of Wales, who realized his alternative vision by sponsoring the construction of the small new town of Poundbury. This little, quiet town mixes traditional architecture and modern town planning, and it aims to create a sustainable and closely-knit community in which people can live and work.