

Nano and the City: Anticipatory Governance and Urban Sustainability

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The visions surrounding the use of nanotechnology in cities, namely, in design, materials, and the built environment, suggest that it could be critically important for solving urban sustainability problems now and in the future. Yet, these visions neither account for the complexity of urban sustainability challenges, nor do they adequately address a host of problems for such a technological fix, including the lack of accessibility, adverse side effects, path dependencies, and the potential social amplification of risk related to urban nanotechnologies. While the nano-enhanced city successively becomes a reality, the many stakeholders—city officials, civil engineers, NGOs, and citizens—who participate in urban development and governance rarely have the chance to deliberate on the opportunities and risks of urban nanotechnologies before they become real. This presentation provides an overview for a critical exploration of the promises and limitations of the nano-enhanced city and sets out an agenda for engaged research to support the anticipatory governance of nanotechnology for urban sustainability.

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