

Headline: Connectivity the secret of smart cities

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Over half of the world's population or 54 percent lives in cities today, and the figure is predicted by the United Nations to rise to 66 percent by 2050.

Three-fourths of the number of cities globally is located near the coast. With rising sea level of close to one meter, if we do not dramatically reverse the rate of climate change, torrential rains and extreme weather events threaten the city. Cities are the source of three-fourths of global carbon emissions.

Paradigm shift

Urbanization and climate change are among the biggest challenges for cities. Smart cities like Copenhagen, winner of the 2014 World Smart Cities Award, use information and communications technology to serve cities to meet their challenges. From a centralized linear city organization, they are moving toward a networked circular organization which actively engages the private sector and the citizenry.

The core of the smart city concept is the collection and analysis of data from the physical environment and data provided directly by citizens. Citizens are the city's end-users so their behavior is intelligently analyzed to arrive at efficient and sustainable solutions.

For example in the small city-state of Singapore, they have a whole transport program that connects the mass transit system, with a capacity of 40 percent of the population, from the subway stops to an efficient bus system to well-studied end points. Covered walks make up for breaks between the mass rail and the bus stops. This was the result of the collection and analysis of data by the government and data provided also by Singaporean citizens through an organized network.

City green ordinance

The vital smart city sectors are energy, water, transport, waste and health.

In 2014, the Mandaluyong City Building Office, together with the Department of Public Works and Highways, the World Bank-International Finance Corp. and the private-sector group Philippine Green Building Initiative, worked out green building standards to be included in the city's building code by way of a city ordinance. Implementation of the ordinance will bring about more energy efficiency, water conservation and solid waste management.

Good governance

Trust in the government is essential for the private sector and the citizenry to actively engage in city administration.

We only get the government we deserve, so the call of the moment is for citizens to be honest in their choice and support of officials. An enlightened and vigilant citizenry merits a good government, not the other way around.

Smart city practices

Millions of Hong Kong inhabitants have a “Smart Card” used for public transport, access to public buildings, shopping, parking and other services.

The city of Boston has started real-time monitoring of personal waste in sewage for signs of impending influenza epidemics and gastrointestinal illnesses and the spread of antibiotics.

Rio de Janeiro youth living in favelas, or low-income neighborhoods, identify risk factors such as large accumulation of waste and rainwater and other damage in the neighborhood through smart phones provided by the project.

Vejle, a city in southern Denmark at the base of a fjord surrounded by hills and threatened by frequent flooding, seeks to improve its climate change resiliency and has joined a network of facilities in the Rockefeller Foundation International network of 100 Resilient Cities.

A sustainable, efficient city is citizen-centered, where the government encourages citizens to report issues and suggest improvements to public authorities using modern communications technology.

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