

Smart city as an engine for sustainable growth

Pytor Lorens stated in 2012 in the magazine “Cities today” that “we need to redefine the concept of urban quality of life, which should include not only efficiency and comfort, but also livability, social justice and long-term stability of the development process”. This long-term stability is the key of the concept, sometimes used without the proper sense, Sustainability.

The UN (UN-Habitat, 2009) states that the goal of sustainable urban development is the creation of an equal balance between economic, environmental, social and governance aspects in order to create more livable and productive cities, town and villages. But there is no unanimity with the terms sustainability and sustainable development when speaking about cities according to different approaches, interests and priorities. However, these different approaches should mix and collaborate for a common decision-making process that makes possible to maintain the quality of life planned in a city forever without a risk of collapse neither because of internal balance mismatches or external abuse of resources.

Following the reasoning, this quality of life planning should take into account different key areas of city operation to assure not only environmental sustainability, but also social and economic sustainability. The OECD summarizes these aspects of

sustainable development by including the interactions between them.

In other words, good city governance should balance these 3 aspects at the same time that balances the different key areas. When speaking about key areas, [we refer to 10 areas](#) such as economics, human resources, environment, social cohesion, urban planning, governance & civic participation, public management, technology, mobility & transport and international presence. All these areas have to be sustainable by themselves, but must be seen as different parts of a system that works as one. Actions in one area affect other areas and resources must be shared and managed together.

Vertical management of the cities must shunt to horizontal and net management. Global strategy and integrated use of the resources are necessary for long term viability of the cities.

And this strategy must be well explained and accepted. Social support is essential and communication must be a central item in the strategy. The project and the strategy should be explained so that the population understands the moves of the city council and the city council should find the way to listen and understand the wishes and the necessities of the population.

Necessities and solutions must be directed to the bottom day by day problems, but the manager of the city must lead and act with a global integrative strategy than guarantees long-term stability of all the areas of the city.

In this context, new technologies allow a more direct interaction with the citizens and provide more tools to achieve long-term sustainability in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and equity. If the large

volume of data generated by a city is collected, purified, organized and displayed with sufficient quality, it can be used as a very powerful asset to improve public services offered to citizens and, at the same time, can help the city managers to establish, evaluate and redefine a long-term sustainability strategy.

The IESE Cities in Motion team¹.

¹ **About us**

IESE Cities in Motion Strategies is a research platform that was launched by the IESE Business School Center for Globalization and Strategy and the IESE Department of Strategy. Our founding partners are:

