วารสารกองทุนพัฒนาสื่อปลอดภัยและสร้างสรรค์
ปีที่ 2 ฉบับที่ 2 เมษายน – มิถุนายน 2566

การใช้ "ซอฟท์ พาวเวอร์"(อิทธิพลอ่อน) อย่างมี
ประสิทธิภาพ: การใช้สื่อในการช่วยเมืองให้ใช้
เทคโนโลยีที่ทันสมัยเพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคม
นน อัครประเสริฐกุล

บทความพิเศษ

การใช้ "ซอฟท์ พาวเวอร์"(อิทธิพลอ่อน) อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ: การใช้สื่อในการช่วยเมืองให้ใช้เทคโนโลยีที่ทันสมัยเพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคม

Effective Soft Power: How Media can Help Cities Harness Smart Technology for Societal Change

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Abstract

Smart cities are all the rage as governments and tech companies promise a dazzling future of innovation. But many initiatives end up as slogans rather than real solutions, failing to use technology to make people's lives better. What if we saw "smart cities" differently – as an opportunity to bring people together, meet local needs, and spread change that benefits more communities? This paper argues that cities and media can partner to develop smart

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cities as "effective soft power": initiatives that directly improve lives, share knowledge for others to adapt, and spread benefits at scale. Media should report how technology helps real people in their neighborhoods. Show what's working and how others can achieve similar results. Ask hard questions about who's included and what's getting better. This challenges leaders to pursue smart cities that serve citizens first. Cities must focus on results, not hype. Work with communities to set priorities. Invest in programs that enhance sustainability and equity. And share frameworks, data, and tools so more places can succeed. By listening to people and measuring actual progress, cities gain credibility and influence. Together, media and cities can transform "smart cities" into a movement that matters: one where technology and governance enhance wellbeing through cooperation on shared interests where people enjoy quality of life improvements and participate in future-building. This paper shares a vision for how we can all help turn "smart cities" into "effective soft power" that benefits society. By focusing on people, progress and partnership with shared aims, smart cities become a catalyst for change that matters.

Keyword: Smart City, Soft Power, Media Literacy, People,

Transformation

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Introduction

Although "smart cities" and "soft power" appear separate at first glance, on closer examination it becomes clear they are intertwined regarding global influences on urban development. In recent years, the term "smart cities" have been popularized by the media as the new trend of urban development, spurring growth in information and communication technology (ICT) as well as digital transformation (Townsend, 2013). At the core, the idea of smart cities is the integration digital technologies into urban infrastructure for citizens' benefit (Arkaraprasertkul, 2022).

Cities and nations that have been successful in using this concept to transform their operation are eager to export their expertise. By doing so, they have created a new domain of attention around the term "smart cities" as one of the essential tools to spur growth, attracting attention from other cities and nation inspired by this new domain of technological possibility. In this respect, "smart cities" has become a form of "soft power" or the ability of to persuade others to do what you want without force or coercion. Coined by the political scientist Joseph Nye (1990), soft power is about attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion or payment, which is the undergirding structure of how media operates through information.

In the context of smart cities, therefore, soft power can be seen as the ability of a city to influence others through its innovative use of technology, sustainable practices, and high quality of life.

This paper introduces the concept of "effective soft power," a play on the term "effective altruism" (Rubenstein, 2016). Although the term has received a mixed reaction recently because of the use of the term in the cryptocurrency community (Szalai, 2022), this paper holds on to the idea that effective altruism is a philosophy and social movement that uses evidence and reason to determine the most effective ways to benefit others. Effective altruism prioritizes efforts based on their scale, neglect, and solvability. Similarly, "effective soft power" is the ability to use to power of attraction and persuasion to affect many lives positively, address neglected issues, and provide tangible solutions to pressing problems. By applying the principles of effective altruism to the concept of soft power, we can begin to envision a new paradigm for smart cities: one that harnesses the power of technology and influence to create a more socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically prosperous world.

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Objectives

This paper seeks to explore how good soft power can create positive societal change globally. We have three objectives for this work.

First, smart cities are recognized as another form of attracting investment while creating opinions about foreign entities via both evidence-based attraction and proof-of-concept.

Second, our research will not dispute the validity behind the term "smart cities," but instead aims at harnessing its popularity generating good soft-power results which contribute more effectively towards societal progress.

Third, we aim to outline directions for both the cities and the media community to help spur the development of smart cities in a way that transforms our society for the better. This begins with promoting media and digital literacy, and extends to expanding the scope of soft power to benefit not just a particular community or country, but the globe at large.

Benefits

The aim of this paper is to provide a vision and framework for how smart cities can yield real and meaningful gains for communities worldwide. By proposing how cities and media can partner to cultivate "effective soft power," the paper hopes to

demonstrate how smart cities can evolve from superficial visions into platforms for change that make a difference. If cities focus on outcomes over hype through participatory and evidenced-based approaches, they stand to gain credibility and global recognition as leaders.

By sharing knowledge and co-creating solutions with broad impact and reach, cities can also drive cooperation on issues like climate change that require collective will and efforts to solve.

Overall, this paper seeks to deliver its benefit in several keyways:

1. It empowers citizens by arguing for transparency, inclusion, and accountability in smart city programs so people can help set priorities and evaluate progress in their communities. When residents participate in shaping initiatives, cities develop solutions that authentically reflect local needs;

2. It encourages city leaders and media to report on and make decisions based on facts and metrics, not flashy visions alone. By taking a longer-term, data-driven view focused on sustainability and equity gains, smart cities can yield returns on investment that matter. Leaders who pursue progress over hype will gain influence and attract partners, investment and talent;

3. It promotes global knowledge sharing between cities so more communities can achieve similar progress through adaptation

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rather than reinvention. By publishing roadmaps, open data, and project tools, cities generate benefits that spread broadly at lower cost. Partnerships and alliances between cities also reduce risks in developing new smart city solutions; and,

4. It proposes how smart cities can become a force for global problem-solving through strategic cultivation of soft power based on collective good. If cities reach out to uplift other communities in addition to serving their own, the smart city movement can achieve scale and lasting impact on challenges that transcend borders.

This paper aims to benefit society by providing a vision for how smart cities and media can work together to spread opportunity, enhance sustainability, and confront global problems through effective soft power and collaborative progress. The framework and outcomes proposed in this paper suggest a path forward for smart cities to achieve their full potential to improve lives in communities everywhere.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this paper is qualitative, drawing on the professional experience of the author as a senior expert in smart city promotion at a national agency in Thailand. The author is responsible for policy development and implementation of smart city initiatives across local municipalities. This experience,

coupled with extensive reviews of literature on smart cities, media and soft power, and urban development, as well as on-site observations of projects, provides a depth of insight into how the concepts of soft power and smart cities intersect to benefit cities and citizens.

This paper is inspired by both the author's professional practice and empirical observations throughout his career promoting urban development. As one of the pioneers in this field, the author has studied the smart city concept extensively and written widely about how smart city initiatives can support nation-building, economic growth, and global cooperation. The author's role developing smart city policies and advising local governments on implementation in Thailand affords a unique vantage point into how cities can cultivate soft power and leverage their global standing.

Primary research methods include:

1. Professional observations and experiences implementing smart city programs with municipal partners across Thailand over the past decade. The author has first-hand knowledge of challenges, successes, and opportunities for maximizing impact.

2. Case study analysis of smart city development of Nakhon Si Thammarat City Municipality, where the author had an advisory role. Both structured and unstructured interviews with key stakeholders and leaders such as the City Municipality Mayor and

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the key personnel (e.g., smart city officers) shed light on both the challenges and opportunities that the city faces. Social listening and social media analysis are also key tools in analyzing public sentiment toward the use of smart city solutions and technology. Quantitative data such as statistics of the city's electronic services is also analyzed in conjunction with the qualitative data. By evaluating progress and outcomes in depth for this city, the author gained key insights on strategies for effective smart city management and promotion.

3. Extensive reviews of national and international literature on topics including soft power as a policy tool, technology innovation in urban planning, participatory governance models for smart cities, metrics and indicators for smart city progress, global knowledge sharing networks between cities, and more. The author synthesized perspectives from global experts and examples of best practices.

4. Participatory observations during site visits to smart cities in Thailand and worldwide, including Vienna, Austria and Incheon, South Korea. By engaging in discussions with government officials, private sector partners and residents involved in smart city programs, the author developed a well-rounded view of approaches.

5. Qualitative data analysis from interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted with participants in select smart city initiatives advised on by the author. Their feedback provided a deeper understanding of citizen priorities and the realities of on-the-ground implementation.

In sum, this paper represents a culmination of the author's professional experience developing smart cities, empirical research conducted to deepen expertise over the past decade, and desire to share a vision for how smart cities can achieve effective soft power to benefit societies around the globe. The qualitative methodologies employed provide a foundation for proposing new conceptual frameworks and policy recommendations with real-world applicability based on practice.

Smart Cities and Soft Power

The political scientist Joseph Nye (1990) coined the term "soft power" to represent one's ability to acquire through attraction rather than coercion or payments. Soft power rests on the appeal of culture, values and a positive vision that resonates with target audiences. Governments invest substantially in tools of soft power like tourism boards, international broadcasting, and cultural as well as academic exchange programs.

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In today's digital age, smart cities have emerged as a compelling new narrative of progress for cities and nations to project globally. Defining what exactly constitutes a "smart city" remains ambiguous, but in broad terms, it implies using technology and data to make urban areas more livable, sustainable and responsive. City governments in particular promote smart city initiatives to raise their profile as forward-looking, innovative places for people and business. This appeal translates into benefits like attracting talent, foreign investment and building new international partnerships.

For example, South Korea has promoted the idea of smart cities and the broader "Fourth Industrial Revolution" as a source of soft power aligned with its agenda for global technological competitiveness. The ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), initiated during the Singapore chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2018, aims to use the smart city model to advance regional cooperation and integration (Tan, Taeihagh and Sha, 2021). It is evident in Singapore's rapid urban development in its "Smart Nation" campaign the reason it initiated ASCN as one of its flagship collaborative networks. For the past few years, Singapore has not only served as a "Shepherd" for aspiring smart cities in the region, but also actively promoted its progress globally through various channels (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2019). Vienna, Austria, has cultivated a reputation as a smart city pioneer to establish itself as

a hub for tech companies and research partnerships around the world (Fernandez-Anez, Fernández-Güell, and Giffinger, 2018). Both Singapore and Vienna have been ranked highly in most of the respected smart city rankings, to the point that some experts see these two cities' exemplars of the concept of smart cities (Wirtz, Müller and Schmidt, 2020). Both Singapore and Vienna attract academic and governmental visitors around the world to learn about their successes. These cases illustrate how the appeal of smart cities as symbols of progress can be harnessed for soft power.

Soft power and smart cities, moreover, are closely linked in both theory and practice. Governments recognize the attraction of smart cities as a vision of innovation and respond by turning them into soft power tools for influence building. The following sections explore in greater depth how different actors are deploying smart cities as soft power for global gains.

Soft Power in Action

The concept of soft power finds a compelling application in the establishment of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN). Launched in 2018, the ASCN is a collaborative platform where 26 cities across the 10 ASEAN member states work towards the common goal of smart and sustainable urban development. The network aims to leverage digital technology to improve urban living,

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promote sustainable development, and enhance regional connectivity (Crumpton et al., 2021).

The ASCN's approach is a prime example of soft power in action. By fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration for which Singapore represents the best exemplar among members of the community, Singapore's initiative to establish the network is the use of soft power to project the nation's influence. From its inception until recently, ASCN not only improves the quality of life in its member cities but also influences urban development trends across the region. For example, one of the 26 ASCN cities Phuket in the south of Thailand has been developing a smart city model focusing on safety and security, which has been a key example shared with other ASCN cities alongside Singapore (Naprathansuk, 2017). Similarly, Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei has been working on a smart water management system, a model that can be replicated in other cities facing water management challenges (Poopraradai et al., 2019).

South Korea's New Southern Policy (NSP) provides another example of soft power in action. Launched by President Moon Jae-in in 2017, the NSP aims to elevate Korea's relationships with ASEAN and India to the level of its traditional four major powers: China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. The policy focuses on three key pillars: People, Prosperity, and Peace.

Under the Prosperity pillar, South Korea is leveraging its technological prowess and economic strength to influence its relationships with these countries (Ha and Ong, 2020). For instance, South Korea has been sharing its smart city expertise with the ASEAN community, helping the latter develop its own smart cities through various measures including the K-City Network Collaboration Program which funds Korean enterprises and agencies to conduct feasibility studies and master planning for smart city initiatives (Bangkok Post, 2020). This not only strengthens the bilateral relationship but also enhances South Korea's image as a leader in smart city development, which is the goal of soft power.

In essence, both the ASCN and South Korea's NSP demonstrate how the concept of smart cities can be used as a form of soft power. They show that by sharing knowledge, technology, and best practices, cities and countries can influence others and shape urban development trends in a way that promotes sustainable development and improves quality of life.

Misunderstanding Soft Power

Some cities adopt the smart city label as a cliché rather than strategically cultivating it as soft power for sustainable growth. For example, several cities in India announced plans for 100 smart cities following the Indian government's Smart Cities Mission in 2015

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(Kumar, Goel, and Mallick, 2018). However, many have made little progress due to lack of vision, funding, or capacity to implement technology solutions and design new governance models (Rana et al., 2019). The smart city remains an empty slogan rather than a platform for real progress

Masdar City in Abu Dhabi was envisioned as a zero-carbon smart city and home to 45,000 people. However, due to shifting investment priorities and lack of demand, Masdar City has stalled at a small fraction of its planned scale after over a decade of development. Its aims for becoming a global cleantech hub have not materialized despite the resources and partners dedicated to making Masdar City a flagship for sustainable urban living (Noori, Hoppe, and de Jong, 2020).

Songdo in South Korea was designed with advanced technology and infrastructure to become a major business district and model for smart cities worldwide. However, Songdo has struggled with low occupancy rates and appeal due to its isolated location, limited amenities, and lag in proposed transit connectivity with Seoul and Incheon. While positioned as a compelling vision of an efficient, high-tech city, Songdo's failure to attract major companies or residents at scale has severely limited its soft power potential (Kshetri, Alcantara, and Park, 2014).

In these cases, smart cities were promoted through flashy visions and partnerships but ultimately lacked strategies to generate meaningful soft power. Some main reasons for this failure include (Khan et al. 2020): First, many of these initiatives focused more on promoting the concept of a smart city rather than achieving tangible outcomes related to livability, sustainability, and economic growth. Substance is essential for soft power, rather than relying solely on catchy slogans.

Second, the lack of a distinctive appeal beyond technology resulted in a failure to attract people and businesses to these cities. Soft power relies on a unique vision and value proposition. Third, the failure to build strategic alliances hindered investment, research, and application opportunities. Announcing partnerships without taking action does not contribute to soft power.

Fourth, neglecting local participation and imposing top-down approaches undermined the success of smart cities. Soft power must be rooted in meeting the needs and aspirations of citizens. Lastly, the short-term mindset of expecting quick results clashed with the long-term nature of smart city development. Soft power is cultivated over years, not months, and requires patience and sustained efforts.

In summary, these examples show how smart cities will fail to achieve soft power if treated superficially. Soft power depends

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on substance, strategy and vision to transform a slogan into sustainable progress. When smart cities lack distinctive appeal, actionable partnerships or a long-term, participatory approach, they do not advance beyond the cliché. For cities to harness smart cities as soft power, they must focus on outcomes, not narratives, and build initiatives that drive local and global gains in the long run. With strategic cultivation, the appeal of smart cities can yield lasting soft power; without it, they remain empty hype (Datta and Odendaal, 2019).

Harnessing the Soft Power of Smart Cities

Invest in sustainable and innovative technologies: Cities should implement smart technologies that directly improve livability, accessibility and environmental quality (Nimmanphatcharin et al., 2020). For example, investing in clean energy, intelligent mobility systems, and e-governance tools. These provide concrete gains that enhance appeal and quality of life. Merely announcing technology partnerships or pilots is insufficient. Cities must drive progress through long-term investment in deploying smart solutions with measurable impact.

Prioritize quality of life and wellbeing: The core rationale of a smart city should be enabling a higher quality of life for residents through technology and innovation (Angelidou, 2014). Livability,

sustainability, equity and community empowerment should guide smart city initiatives. If programs do not benefit or engage citizens, they will not succeed. Cities should evaluate how well smart city plans and projects are meeting citizen needs and delivering public goods. Making progress toward livability and wellbeing goals also strengthens soft power by attracting new investment, businesses and talent.

Foster a culture of openness and collaboration: Effective smart cities are open, collaborative and driven by local participation. They share data, insights and solutions to spread knowledge that benefits communities more broadly. They work with diverse partners across sectors to co-create locally-appropriate innovations. And they engage citizens to help shape smart city initiatives through transparency, digital access and open innovation programs. This culture of openness is essential for global influence and recognition as a leader in smart city development. Others seek to learn from and partner with cities that have an authentic, collaborative model for progress.

Recognize and strategically leverage soft power: City leaders must understand that smart cities have become a source of soft power on the global stage, but this power depends on real outcomes and achievements. With strategic cultivation and promotion, cities can leverage the appeal of their smart city brand

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and solutions to attract new opportunities for partnership, investment and talent. But first cities must focus on "doing" rather than slogans - building a unique set of smart and sustainable programs that substantially improve urban life. Cities can then share frameworks, project tools, and progress evaluations with peers around the world as a means to spread their influence while benefiting other communities.

In summary, smart cities will translate into soft power when they make sustainable technology investments that enhance livability; prioritize public good through openness and collaboration; evaluate progress based on outcomes over hype; and strategically share knowledge with others for mutual gain. When cities recognize and build soft power in this way, the smart city narrative becomes a catalyst for global cooperation and progress. Cities and their citizens will thrive as a result.

Nakhon Si Thammarat: A Case Study in Smart Cities and Soft Power

Nakhon Si Thammarat, a city in southern Thailand, serves as an excellent case study of how the principles of smart cities can be effectively implemented and leveraged as a form of soft power. The

city has received numerous awards and recognition for its innovative use of technology to improve urban living, and it has successfully used the concept of a smart city as a point of attraction for investors and visitors alike. The city's journey towards becoming a smart city has been marked by a comprehensive and scalable approach. Rather than focusing on isolated initiatives, Nakhon Si Thammarat has sought to integrate technology into various aspects of urban living, leading to increased measurable sense of wellbeing from all fronts (Kaewsuk and Deveporihartakula, 2022). One of the key initiatives has been the development of a smart transportation system.

By implementing smart water monitoring management systems and intelligent e-service, the city has been able to reduce redundancies thus enhance the overall efficiency of its urban management. This has not only improved the quality of life for residents but also made the city more attractive to visitors and investors. In addition, public safety and healthcare are other areas where the city has made significant strides. By implementing advanced surveillance systems, smart emergency response systems, and digital health solutions, the city has been able to improve the safety and health of its residents.

Finally, Nakhon Si Thammarat has leveraged technology to boost its tourism sector. Through smart tourism apps, augmented

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reality experiences, and smart city tours, the city has been able to enhance the visitor experience and attract more tourists.In essence, Nakhon Si Thammarat's approach to becoming a smart city serves as a model for other cities around the world. It shows that by integrating technology into various aspects of urban living, cities can not only improve the quality of life for their residents but also attract more investment and visitors. Moreover, it demonstrates how the concept of a smart city can be used as a form of soft power, influencing urban development trends and positioning the city as a leader in sustainable urban development.

Conclusion

Smart cities have become a source of soft power for governments and companies promoting an appealing vision of technological progress and innovation. However, many smart city initiatives fail to achieve meaningful outcomes or improve lives at scale. They confuse slogans and hype for real solutions.

This paper proposes that cities and their partners cultivate "effective soft power" through smart cities. Soft power does not have to be about the use of non-coercive authority to influence others to benefit the source of power. "Effective soft power" means developing initiatives guided by the principles of effective altruism – targeting challenges that greatly and urgently need to be

addressed, and offering solutions that can achieve measurable progress through cooperation. Effective soft power depends on:

1. Focusing on outcomes over hype. Smart city plans and projects should directly enhance sustainability, equity, quality of life and prosperity. They must be evaluated based on measurable indicators of real-world improvement.

2. Prioritizing problems that are large-scale, neglected and solvable. Cities should determine priorities for smart cities based on gaps in infrastructure and services that disproportionately impact citizens. Interventions should have evidence-based potential for impact at scale.

3. Using open and participatory approaches. Engaging diverse groups of citizens and stakeholders to shape priorities and strategies. This helps build initiatives that authentically fit local needs. Participation also increases sense of ownership and hardiness of solutions.

4. Sharing knowledge globally to benefit others. Cities should publish frameworks, tools, data and progress evaluations from smart city programs so other cities can adapt and replicate their successes. By open-sourcing smart city solutions, cities exert influence through empowering peers rather than slogans alone. They drive benefit at a higher scale.

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5. Forging strategic alliances and partnerships. Cities should work with other cities, communities, experts, private sector and civil society organizations in alliances aimed at co-creating and deploying smart city solutions that achieve effective soft power. Cross-sector collaboration allows for more transformative initiatives.In summary, effective soft power through smart cities means taking an evidence-based, outcome-oriented and globally collaborative approach to using technology and policy for change that matters.

By focusing on participation, knowledge sharing and cooperation toward solutions for shared problems, cities can develop smart cities as a platform to improve lives at scale near and far. The result is lasting influence and progress on challenges that no city can solve alone. This framework proposes how to achieve smart cities as a catalyst for change that achieves effective soft power - not hype, but hope. The potential for global partnership and open innovation is boundless if cities start with listening to their citizens and measuring what really makes communities thrive. From there, the benefits can spread by empowering others with the keys to progress.

Recommendations

Here are recommendations for cities and media to cultivate smart cities as effective soft power:

For cities:

1. Focus on outcomes, not narratives. Develop smart city initiatives that directly improve sustainability, livability and prosperity rather than superficial slogans or visions. Soft power depends on demonstrable progress and impact.

2. Build strategic, actionable partnerships. Work with private sector, research and community partners in ways that drive investment in and applications of smart city solutions. Partnerships must translate into on-the-ground change, not just announcements.

3. Empower citizens to participate. Top-down smart cities that do not meet local needs will fail. Engage residents through digital literacy and open innovation programs so they can help shape the future of their communities.

4. Take a long-term, evidenced-based view. Developing a smart city requires decades. Create roadmaps, secure funding and evaluate progress based on facts and milestones rather than flashy short-term gains. Think scale, solvability and sustainability.

5. Share knowledge to benefit others. Contribute to global understanding of how to build smart and sustainable cities by publishing frameworks, project tools and evaluations that others can

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adapt. Soft power spreads through cooperation that aids progress beyond one's borders.

For media:

1. Report on outcomes and impact, not hype. Feature stories that evaluate the real progress and results of smart city initiatives, not futuristic visions or slogans alone. This helps audiences understand effective models of change.

2. Spread awareness of participation and empowerment. Highlight smart city programs that authentically engage citizens through digital access, data transparency and open innovation. Show how people are driving change from the grassroots up through smart cities.

3. Build digital and media literacy. Educate and empower audiences to think critically about smart cities, ask key questions about outcomes and help them understand how to get constructively involved in their community's initiatives. Promote an informed public that demands effectiveness.

4. Share knowledge globally for adaptation. Report on smart city roadmaps, partnerships and projects in ways that help others understand key milestones, evaluate what works, and replicate success. Media can spread lessons between cities and nations.

5. Call for long-term, evidence-based evaluation of progress. Feature experts that argue for smart city initiatives to be assessed

based on livability, sustainability and economic measures over longer timescales. Encourage governments and funders to support this type of rigorous monitoring and impact analysis.

By taking a multidimensional approach focused on driving progress through strategic action, knowledge sharing and citizen empowerment, cities and media can work together to cultivate smart cities as a sustainable source of effective soft power. When smart cities result in real solutions that spread around the world, they move beyond empty narratives and benefit all of society. Cities and media should lead the charge toward using technology and collaboration for the greater global good.

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