Memorandum

To: U.S. Department of State, EAP/MLA, ASEAN/EAS Unit
From: Heather Atherton, Student, Wilbur Wright College
Subject: U.S./ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership (USASCP)
Date: May 1st, 2020

Issue for Discussion

Through partnerships with ASEAN countries, promoting an equitable and democratic approach to the effective implementation and utilization of smart technologies in a variety of projects across Southeast Asia.

Background & Context

At the 6th ASEAN/U.S. Summit in Singapore on November 15, 2018, an initial investment of $10 million was announced to launch the U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership (USASCP), a strategic move in lending the private and public sector knowledge of the United States toward implementation of smart technologies in cities belonging to the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN). The USASCP is committed to improving the daily lives of SE Asian citizens by:

1. Promoting U.S. private sector engagement in smart city solutions and the digital economy in ASCN cities;
2. Sharing best practices and promoting collaboration between innovative programs in U.S. cities with their counterparts in the ASCN;
3. Strengthening regional cybersecurity capability and capacity at the sub-national level.[1]

Recommendations

In order to effectively meet the partnership goals of USASCP, any planning and implementation of smart technologies within the pilot cities of ASCN must be enacted with an equitability structure. To be successful, a holistic approach must be utilized that addresses livability, built on the four interwoven foundational pillars detailed below as the SHIP Implementation Initiative. The main goal of smart cities should be livability for all residents, else the projects become nothing more than vanity experiments with zero practicality.[2] For smart technology to genuinely improve the lives of the citizens that interact with it, planning must be people-centric and focus must center on the equitable concepts of Safety, Honesty, Inclusion, and Planning (SHIP):

- Safety – Expansion of the use of data gathering technologies increases the vulnerability municipalities face from a cybersecurity standpoint, leaving cities, their systems, and their citizens open to predatory practices and disruption. Beyond adopting strategies to address security risks, ASCN pilot cities are poised to lead in developing and implementing practices that ensure the safety of their citizen's information. A key

[1] "www.usascp.org." https://www.usascp.org/.

[2] "Susan J. Winter: "Cui bono? A Sociotechnical View of Smart ...." https://informatics.tuwien.ac.at/stories-1767.

challenge in achieving this will be confronting obstacles in infrastructure. Power grids and internet support will require reinforcement to support mass encryption and fast transmission of large amounts of data. Of equal importance are contingency plans for power outages, which create disruption under optimal circumstances and chaos in emergencies where rapid response times are critical for the protection of citizens.[3] Appropriate pre-planning and analysis of past mistakes are vital to ensuring safety.

- Honesty – The city of Boston, Massachusetts, has created a "Smart City Playbook"[4] that employs plain language to address public concerns often left undiscussed by big tech companies in their planning for smart technologies and implementation of Internet of Things (IoT). Of Boston's six expectations, one calls for a public privacy policy. The citizens interacting with smart technologies, voluntarily or involuntarily, deserve transparency in how data is collected, stored, and used. Chicago's Array of Things (AoT) project faced pushback from the public, concerned with issues surrounding the collection and storage of data.[5] The AoT project responded with a multi-agency partnership and accessible public disclosures.[6] ASCN cities would be wise in forming similar partnerships between government, big tech, and planners that allow for cohesive strategies in transparency.

- Inclusion – There is inherent risk involved in implementing smart technologies to confront issues that have been inadequately addressed by local governments in the past. "A big reason for the disconnect between smart city potential and reality is the fact that smart cities are where the digital world blends, but can also collide, with the non-digital world."[7] Part of this disconnect stems from misapplying data driven solutions to human problems, without addressing the underlying cause. To create truly equitable solutions, examination of root cause is key. Technology is a focus on the future when, often, planners and officials should pay more mind to the present and the past. Ideas that propose superficial solutions to issues that are fundamentally structural or institutionalized will ultimately fail. Reliance on technology is equally frivolous if those that serve to benefit most are unable to access it in the first place. Successful smart cities are those that address the needs of everyday citizens and past implementations have failed by benefitting the affluent to the detriment of the disadvantaged. Increasing traffic surveillance and transit in heavily traveled tourist areas does nothing for, and may even pull resources further away from, low-income residents that must travel further from

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[3] "Key Challenges of Smart Cities & How to Overcome Them." 25 Sept. 2018, https://ubidots.com/blog/the-key-challenges-for-smart-cities/.

[4] "Boston Smart City Playbook — from the Mayor's Office of ...." https://monum.github.io/playbook/.

[5] "What Chicago's "Array of Things" Will Actually Do ...." 27 Jun. 2014, https://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/June-2014/What-Chicagos-Array-of-Things-Will-Actually-Do.

[6] "Array of Things | Argonne National Laboratory." https://www.anl.gov/mcs/array-of-things.

[7] "The Inconvenient Truth about Smart Cities - Scientific ...." 17 Nov. 2017, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/the-inconvenient-truth-about-smart-cities/.

home for greater economic opportunity. Looking further toward the future, understanding that urban areas are the testing grounds for tech, the needs of a city dweller will vary drastically from a rural farmer. Ideally, smart technology will move beyond heavily populated areas and serve entire regions, even countries. Development of potential should not be restricted by tunnel vision and failure to think beyond a small geographic boundary. What improves livability for the advantaged must also benefit the poor. What streamlines city life should also have implementation value for rural life.

- Planning – Holistic planning often takes a backseat to idealism when it comes to creating smart cities. There is a growing movement toward creating what is termed as a "Smart Enough City."[8] The argument against the traditional ideas and construction of smart cities is that they are developed through the narrow view of "tech goggles" to the detriment of all else. People are removed from the process and complex economic, political, and social issues are oversimplified to fit narrow technical criteria with the intent of optimization. By expanding a myopic, efficiency-centered view to address the factors that have created the issues requiring resolution, they are more effectively addressed. The people-centered approach to planning relies on the inclusion of citizens working alongside municipal government and tech corporations to create viable solutions to immediate needs. There must be buy in to ensure public support in addition to securing and maintaining financial partnerships required for long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The SHIP Initiative addresses the shortcomings that have plagued implementation of smart technologies in the past. The reality is that "the strategic management of place focuses overwhelmingly on economic competitiveness, with livability taking a backseat."[9] By bringing in those whose lives can be made better with technology in partnership with municipalities and U.S. big tech, ASCN is uniquely positioned to develop cutting edge strategies that will enable Southeast Asia to become a model in smart city technology utilization. Whereas countries such as China have had successes in tech integration with an authoritarian bent, they have failed to address the underlying causes of the issues they attempt to solve. By planning for the future with an equitable, people-centric approach, the utilization of smart city technology can work to meet the basic needs of the urban citizen and continue to evolve, bringing opportunities beyond the city limits. The key concepts of safety, honesty, inclusion, and planning are closely interrelated and integral to the success of the proposals under consideration across the ASEAN member countries.

[8] "The Smart Enough City." https://smartenoughcity.mitpress.mit.edu/.

[9] Winter, "Cui bono? A Sociotechnical View of Smart ...."