



Episode 8 – SmartWatt Sustainable City Index

Welcome back, to the second installment in SmartWatt Weekly’s Sustainable Cities series. Last time we took a deep dive into the term “sustainable” and “sustainability”. Firstly, we pinpointed the etymological origin of the term and discovered that the 1970s is when the word gained proverbial “steam”. Secondly, we defined the parameters pertaining to sustainable cities. Finally, we emphasized that global trends depicting a rapidly urbanizing populace has propelled the study of sustainability in cities to the forefront of environmental discussion. It is this last point that SmartWatt took initiative and composed a sustainable cities index. This vested interest coupled with countless hours of research and old fashioned brainstorming culminated in the first sustainable cities index out of the Middle East. This episode will only explore the “macros” of the index, with further details incorporated in later episodes. Without further ado, let’s look at the thought behind this process, and the seven pillars that uphold SmartWatt’s Sustainable Cities Index.

For our context, an index is a “sign or measure of something”. SW’s Sustainable cities index is very much a benchmark to guide cities on those aspects that must be incorporated for the holistic implementation of sustainability. When our team embarked on this mission, we started from an unassuming position, our goal was to simply associate terms that are synonymous with sustainability. As our whiteboard filled with a myriad of terms, we began to understand the intricacies in the sustainability phenomenon. Nonetheless, we pushed through as we familiarized ourselves with the overarching bottom-line: sustainability, in general, is about preserving for the future, particularly future generations. But the question is preserving what? Consequently, we examined the amenities we utilize in our cities and concluded that an index must address every aspect of our consumables.

As mentioned above, SW Sustainable Cities Index is comprised of 7 pillars. These 7 pillars connect the mandate: to protect natural resources, to be cost-effective to residents, and to be socially conscience, to the foundation: sustainable knowledge and flexibility, commercial value to the city, and an iconic image. The foundation underpins the would-be goals of a city on its path of implementing sustainable solutions. This foundation is purely theoretical and in no way, captures all the reasons why a city would embark on a sustainable path. More on this last point in future episodes.

The mandate in our case is the end goal or the output from all the inputs we plug in. Again, just like the foundation, the variables we mention in the mandate are purely theoretical, and of course, a cities goals will indeed vary.

However, let’s explore the meat of this sandwich, the middle part, the 7 pillars that SmartWatt believes you must examine as a city to board the sustainable city express. Power, Water, Food, Transport, Urban Planning, Public/ Private Amenities, and finally the Economics pillar. These are the

7 subjects' SW says the centralized decision making body must address when exploring ways to incorporate sustainability.

When examining each pillar, we asked ourselves 5 questions: What is the pillar? Who uses the pillar? What does it need to operate? What are the options? How can it be integrated with the other pillars? Each question reinforces the thought process the SmartWatt team had in composing the index. SmartWatt took a basic bottom-up approach to truly understand the niceties of each aspect of the index.

On the periphery of the index are enablers, and drivers. Enablers bolster the index and ensure optimal function and efficiency of each pillar. In our case, we identified ICT, including all the data technology and communication required to ensure the pillars meet the mandate. The drivers catalyze the realization of the pillars. An integral driver we acknowledged was community management.

This last point is crucial and is the driver that steers a city on its sustainable journey. We want to emphasize that becoming a sustainable city is not so much an end goal. Incorporating sustainability in a cities infrastructure and landscape is a path, it's a continuous, perpetual effort that is charged by a will, a determination and a resolve to accomplish. This index, is a guide, a starting point, and merely our perspective on where to look to include sustainability in a city plan. This episode is only a peek into the work done at SmartWatt with regards to sustainability. In later episodes, we'll look at cities we studied when composing our index, and the many points we learned, particularly the organic growth depicted in many cities sustainability timelines. We will refer to the pillars we identified today, and explore the mandate of the cities we chose, as champions of the sustainable revolution.