

Source Advisory Presents its first odd cast series: Smart cities, sustainability and solarization

Talking about smart cities, how do cities get smart - this question leads us to the smartest ones in an urban environment – the one known as the human being. How do humans get their smarts – reading a lot of books – eh, that's book smart – so what else, what is the other kind of smart – street smart – interesting isn't it. However, one who is street smart has some book smarts imparted already in them. It is just that – they like to observe, practice, fail, try again and learn. They talk, communicate, brainstorm, analyze, realize and synthesize information. They create, upgrade, fantasize and achieve what they want to.

Coming back to cities. Cities are inanimate places without their humans. So how do cities get smart, do any other elements of a city read, talk, learn, discuss, engage in social situations or do any other intelligent life-form stuff. If you are guessing no, then you were correct – did you see what I did there – I changed the tense in a single sentence – because you would have been correct about this stuff a 100 years ago, before the inception of the internet. With internet available machines like computers with passive intelligence have started communicating with each other. Also, we have known computers to be able to talk to humans for a long time now. Those bleep bloops, those error messages, those pixels on the screens and now our three favorite women – Siri, Cortana and Alexa. It's like we created small less intelligent versions of our selves into square boxes and taught them slowly to talk like us.

But how does a door knob in a public library, or a light bulb on the subway, or the flush in a public toilet get smart. These things are as inanimate as a dead corpse dug from underneath the earth. So, we thought why not give these dummies internet and give it an even dumber name – The Internet of Things. So we gave these things small computer brains called microprocessors and gave them the senses like – touch, vision, closeness and to some we gave an OCD too we made them germophobes. So now the toilets have started flushing themselves, light bulbs have started turning off when not in use, door knobs have started getting locked behind your backs.

However, the bigger impact is on all the essential utilities in a city. The telephone, electricity, water, transport and waste management services. The top most smart cities in the world include New York, London and Singapore. India has 98 cities under this radar. Smart cities can actually help achieve operational efficiency in every part and segment of the city, be it infrastructure, energy, water or waste. Be Prepared for the next Odd cast next Saturday. Till then see ya!