



DYNAMICS OF NEO-LIBERAL ERA – THE IDEA OF SMART GOVERNANCE IN NEW TOWN KOLKATA

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Abstract:-

Smart city have emerged in as a dominant phenomenon in the urban context worldwide in the 21st century. In India, Smart cities assumed a centralized role in building futures of cities in India triggered by ‘post-cplonial utopian dream’, driven by neoliberal logic and entrepreneurial interest in the city that has the potential to undermine democratic values. The Smart Cities Mission is a central government initiative in India launched in the year 2015 triggered by political regime change at the center. The Mission is reflective of a paradidm shift in India’s planning and development policy response to increasing levels of urbanization aimed in urban renewal projects, affordable housing for the urban poor and pan-city development projects that involve ‘smart’ technological interventions. Proponents of smart cities targeted to achieve increased awareness of citizens through education campaigns to gain public trust in the smart governance pathways, human oriented planning with increased public participation focus on ethical ans legal awareness regarding privacy and cybercrimes, and achieving digital urbanization with smart technology or Information and Communication Technology. Smart cities provide ample opportunities to its citizens for jobs, economic development, better living standard. Cities provide smart grid like electrical infrastructure with ICTs, smart water management, smart traffic and transportation syatem, smart waste management system, smart security system, e-Governance and open government engaging citizens through collaborative organisations. We examine the making of the smart city proposal submitted in 2015-2018 by New Town Kolkata (NTK). The smart city proposal was not satisfactorily distributive, participatory and responsive. It rarely accounted for the specific needs of poorer and vulnerable citizens. Citizen participation was tightly controlled through top-down design and practice of the techniques with one way flow of information from the city adminisration to the citizens. The proposal was responsive to some citizens’s voices, but only those belonging to the more affluent calsses. A messy diversity of citizens’s voices was thus closed down as the officials filtered and cherry-picked citizens voices that were well aligned with the official technocratic vision of ‘global’ smart urbanism. The paper upholds how democracy can be put in the service of technocracy, within a rhetoric of citizen participation and social inclision that embodies smart urbanism.

Key Words:- Smart-City, Urbanism, Planning, Participation, Undemocratic, Inclusion, Governance.

I. Introduction

The proposal of smart city is a foundational pillar of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, aiming to transform urban centres into sustainable, high tech and inclusive economic hubs. It focuses on technology and AI integration which result in Intelligent City Command and Control Centres for real-time traffic, water and energy management. It aims to make sustainable and green infrastructure and prioritize decentralized clean energy (solar panel), smart grids, green buildings and circular resource management to achieve climate resilience. It enhances mobility and housing by expanding metro networks, electric vehicle infrastructure and affordable housing initiatives (PMAY) to reduce congestion and accommodate growing urban populations. It focuses on inclusive urban planning by integrating self-sufficient local economies, healthcare and educational facilities within walkable distance. Viksit Bharat have a dream of smart urban transformations and delivering affordable and luxurious living to all citizen by providing smart solutions through various technological drives.

Smart cities represent a digital turn in urban development (Datta,2018: Wiig and Wyly,2016:487) aimed at optimising cities using digital solutions developed by technology firms and promoted by management consultants. Smart city initiatives are a dominant phenomenon in the urban context worldwide in the 21st century. In India smart cities have assumed a centralized role in building futures of cities in India triggered by regime change in the year 2014. The smart cities mission is a central government initiative in India, launched in the year 2015 triggered by a political regime change at the center. The mission reflects a paradigm shift in India’s planning and development policy response to increasing levels of urbanization

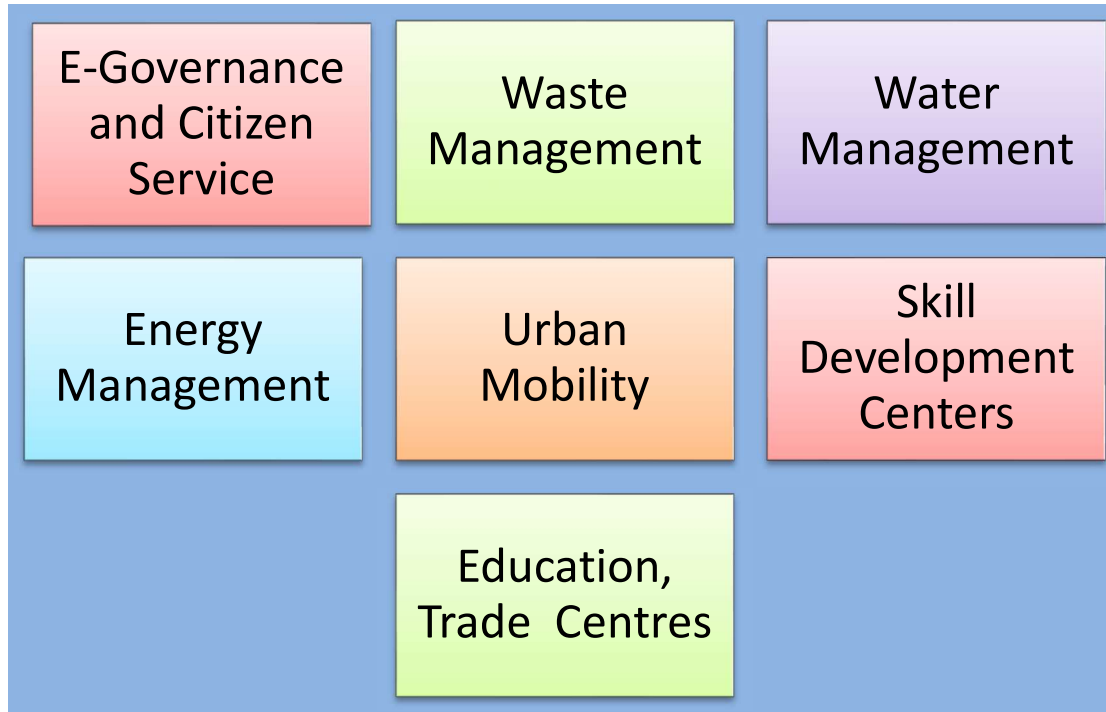


(Pathak,2020; Praharaj ed, 2018). The mission is broadly based on a combination of institutional structures and urban-design-based approaches in planning. Smart city planning is based on four main components – area-based retrofitting of particular city areas, urban renewal projects, affordable housing for the urban poor and pan-city development projects that involve ‘smart’ technological interventions. Smart city mission is materializing in many Indian cities in the form of projects, handled by different existing state departments. Drivers of smart city projects are globalization, technological advances in urban spaces, increasing investments in the marketing field and entrepreneurial shifts in governance that have resulted in attempts to city branding (Christofi ed, 2021). Local drivers are under institutional pressure to involve the private sector due to increasing pressures of urbanization, political influence and environmental risks (Alsaid). Cities are referred to as the engines of economic growth by providing ample opportunities to its citizen for jobs, economic development, better living standard. The Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) has clearly stated that the fundamental purpose of a smart city is to drive economic growth and improve (www.smartcities.gov.in) the quality of life of citizens.

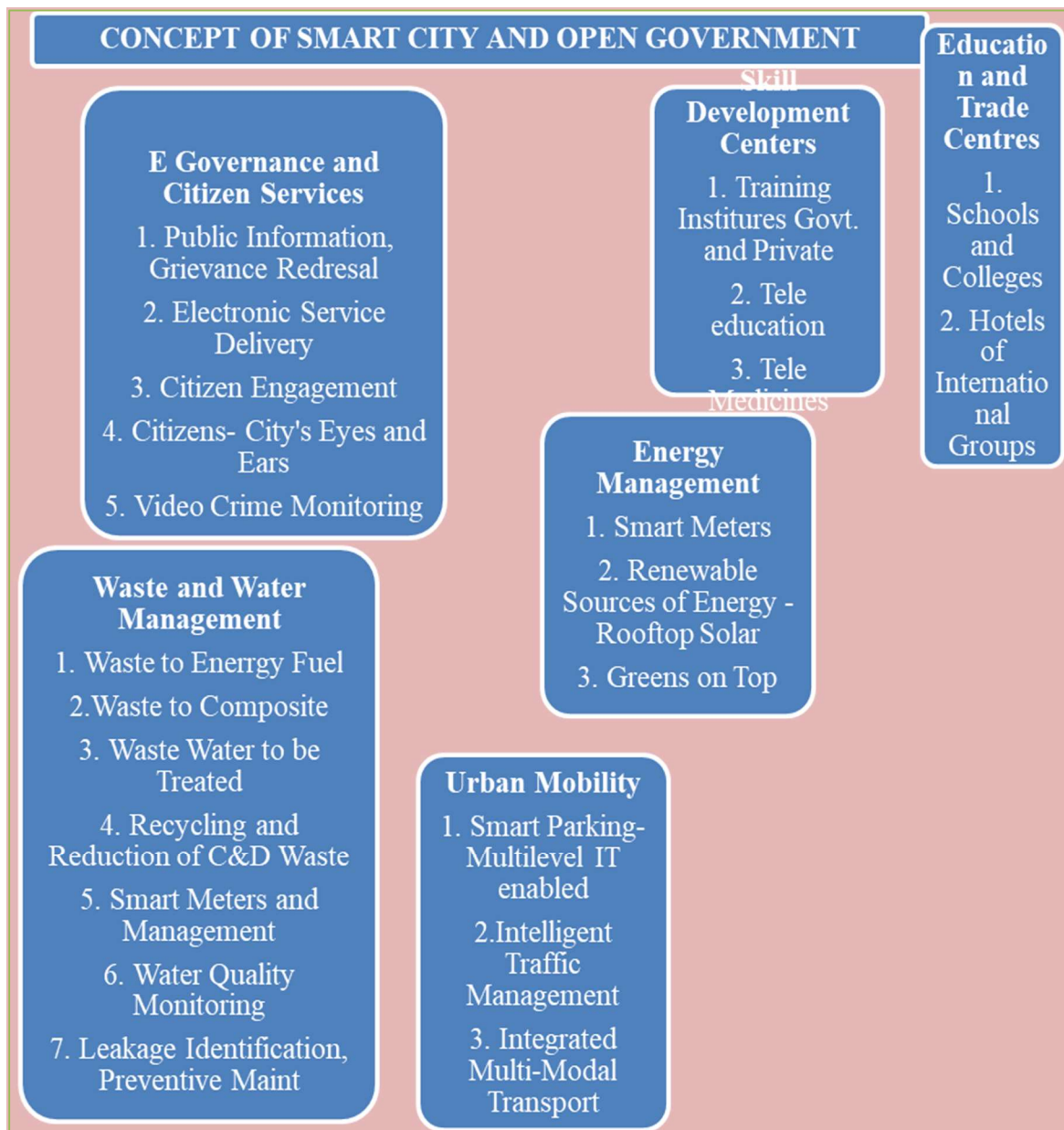
II. Concept of Smart City

Smart cities may be defined as the cities that use information and communication technologies to deliver services to their citizens (Cohen). Smart cities use information and communication technologies (ICT) to be more intelligent and efficient in the use of resources resulting in cost and energy savings, improved service delivery and quality of life and reduced environmental footprint – all supporting innovation and providing low-cost service delivery to marginalised sections of the society. Attributes of smart cities include – E-Governance and Citizen Service, Waste Management, Water Management, Energy Management, Urban Mobility, Education, Trade and Skill Development Centres (www.smartcities.gov.in).

SMART SOLUTIONS



STRATEGIC COMPONENTS OF SMART CITIES



E-Governance and Citizen Services – E-governance transforms smart cities by using digital tools and data to deliver fast, transparent public services to residents. Key citizen services include municipal documentation (instant online access for birth, death and property certificates), urban issue tracking (mobile apps to report potholes, waste overflow or street light failures with real time status updates), utility management (digital billing and monitoring for water, electricity and sewerage networks), public safety and traffic (automated traffic control, air quality tracking and emergency accident response co-ordination), mobile governance (M- governance), internet of Things (IoT: sensors that collect real-time data on waste levels, pollution and energy use), artificial intelligence (AI: predictive algorithms that forecast traffic jams and help manage public health needs), blockchain (secure and unchangeable record keeping for land titles and transparent civic procurement). Smart governance reduces corruption, cuts down paperwork, increases administrative transparency and saves time for urban residents (www.smartcities.gov.in).



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Waste Management – Waste management is the collection, transport, processing or disposal, managing and monitoring of waste materials. As UN Environmental Programme, 2010 waste management can be effectively done by reduction, redeployment and recycle of waste. Glass, paper, metals and plastics be recycled to produce usable items, waste is collected automatically and disposed in automated process, waste is utilised as compost to increase soil fertility. Non-biodegradable waste is collected and disposed cautiously like metal parts, silicon or plastic wastes (ibid).

Water Management – Through smart water demand management, water resource management and water infrastructure management like installing smart water meters, automated billing, greywater management, rainwater harvesting and water treatment plants are deployed to use water resources efficiently and to supply demand of fresh water to the urban cities (ibid).

Energy Management – Electrical infrastructures are planned to promote co-location of generation and load to reduce the need for long haulage of power and increase efficiency. With advanced control and communication, microgrids shall be developed to ensure continuous power availability even during disaster by using locally available resources. Smart grids thus aim at providing reliable and high-quality service to consumers while ensuring sustainability through the use of renewable resources and energy efficiency measures. Net meter arrangement or single meter shall be installed in any premise which records net energy values and the same shall be used for billing by the utilities, thereby reducing electricity bills. Solar panels to be installed to reduce daily electricity consumption (ibid).

Urban Mobility- A city suffocates once it stops or if the traffic is seized, and hence smart technology is adopted to handle transport rash and traffic signalling for citizen convenience. Automatic traffic lights, LED based smart street lights, online traffic monitoring (with numerous closed-circuit televisions, cameras, sensors, drones) efficiently handles large traffic jams, diversions of traffic. Geographic information system (GIS) mapping of assets enables the administration to carry out geospatial monitoring. Emergency kiosks counters shall be installed on highways to provide basic amenities like phone and first aid, emergency contact numbers, location of nearby hospitals, police stations, present location of vehicles, helpline numbers, GPS tagged buses, SMS based tracking and Wi-Fi enabled public buses (ibid).

Smart security system is the buzzword of smart city and an important indicator of urban mobility to maintain personal freedom, law and order, civil liberties and the functioning of political institutions in the market economy. It includes electronic surveillance through CCTV cameras placed at strategic locations, virtual monitoring of incidence and riots and prompt decision by police in the place of incidence, security alarms in public places and vehicles, e-filing of FIRs such as theft of vehicle and phone and real time monitoring of patrolling teams. Smart city also includes multi-level IT enabled smart parking lots and integrated multi-modal transport system (ibid).

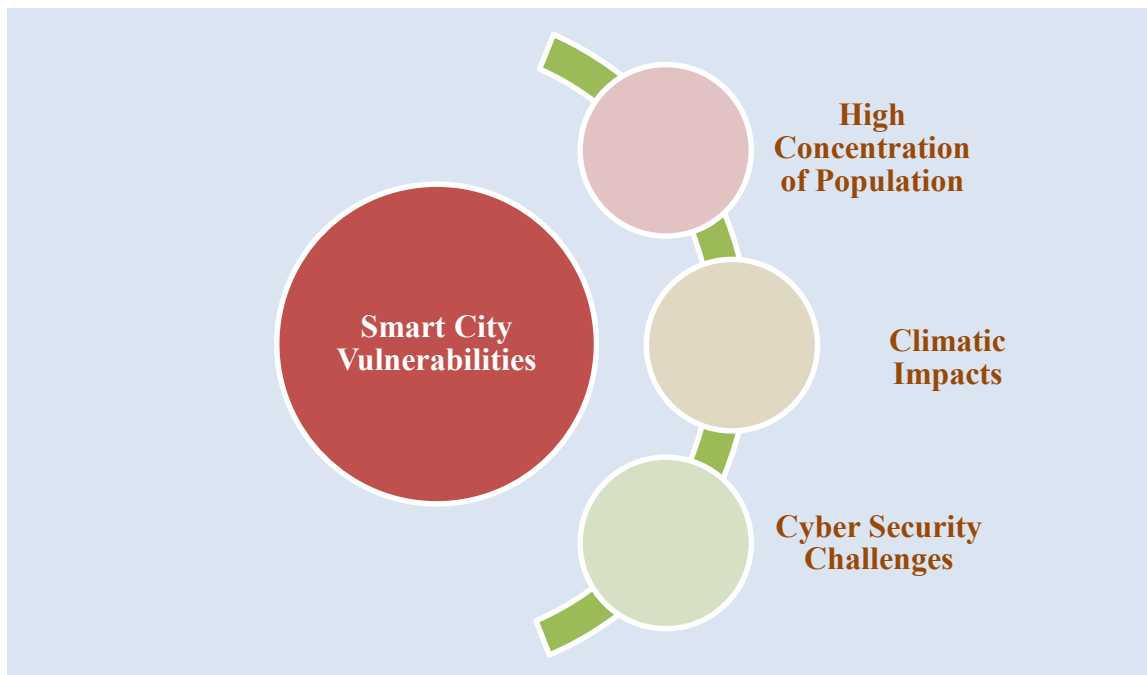
Education, Trade and Skill Development Centres – Education highly relies on digital literacy to increase active participation in governance and hence teaches students to use technology and data responsibility. Digital networks extend learning beyond traditional schools into workplaces, museums and community centres for citizens of all ages. Green campuses use smart technology to reduce paper waste and optimize energy use. Learning has become personalized like AI driven platforms adapt lessons to match each student's pace, skills and unique needs. Smart classrooms with IoT devices, interactive tools and virtual reality create immersive and collaborative spaces (ibid).

India's modern smart cities serve as the nexus between the Skill India Mission and urban modernization, designed to create a tech-savvy workforce for automated city infrastructure. These centres operate via government backed hubs, public-private partnerships and specialized vocational programs designed to match evolving industry requirements. Skill initiative took place under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) a dedicated smart launch in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation to focus explicitly on urban skilling modules and the first to establish by the New Delhi Municipal Council focusing on urban skilling modules. Based on private-public partnership (PPPs) major corporations collaborate with municipal hubs to offer specialized technical exposure for example Tata Indian Institute of Skills (TIIS), Tech Mahindra Foundation's Smart Centres deliver specialized ITES, banking and digital skills tailored for urban markets. Organizations like the Smart Cities Council build digital academies offering specialized certifications in Smart City



Development and Management to align academic curriculum with modern urban challenges. Shifting from basic manual labour trades to digitally integrated operations. For municipal capacity building training is been given to city municipal workers to operate infrastructure, handle modern waste management systems and run automated public utilities. To increase youth employment, it provides short term, subsidized or free training to urban youth to guarantee absorption into tech and smart infrastructure fields. Unlike traditional trade centres that only teach conventional mechanics or carpentry, smart city skill development centres focus heavily on automated, green and digital infrastructure (ibid).

Smart City Vulnerabilities



Smart cities due to their various advantages in terms of social and economic benefits are a magnet for large populations searching for better living standards and employment generation. Therefore, these cities would be the center of productive workforce and major economic activities. Because of enhanced dependency on data sensors, automation technologies, ICTs, software analytical applications etc., any disruption may disintegrate whole array of services and jeopardise smart city ecosystem. Very high concentration of population and economic activities make smart cities vulnerable to severe damage in terms of human lives as well as financial breakdown (ibid).

Urban centres develop on coastal or riverside are exposed to sea-level rise and storm surges. Climate impacts such as storms, floods and droughts have financial impacts, causing major disruption to business operations and city finances. Disaster risk reduction is one of the key aspects in smart city development.

Smart delivery of services relies on ICT which run a 'smart city', they may become the weakest link in the chain and essential public services become vulnerable to cyber security challenges. Therefore, smart city should have solutions with robust, embedded cyber security and mitigation strategies in case of loss of data (ibid).

III. Smart Drives in New Town Rajarhat - Kolkata (NTK)

New Town (Rajarhat-New Town) is a planned Satellite city of Kolkata in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is administered by NKDA (New Town Kolkata Development Authority). New Town is declared as a "Solar City" and "Smart Green City" by Government of India. HIDCO plans developing infrastructure like - roads, drains, sewerage line, water supply lines,



major embellishment works and executed constructions like - buildings, projects, parks, museum, subways, over-bridges in New Town. An information technology and residential hub is developed at New Town (www.hidco@2020 – New Town Kolkata). New Town was enabled with 10.5 km of Wi-Fi Zone along the Major Arterial Road (part of Biswa Bangla Sarani) from Haldiram, near Kolkata Airport to Salt Lake Sector V, which also make it India's first Wi-Fi road connectivity. The stretch has already been declared as a green corridor.

The area mainly consisted of huge acres of cultivable lands and water bodies, which was acquired and developed in a planned manner. The process of investing in residential and industrial facilities and infrastructural development of the area was mainly started under the leadership of the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu in the late 1990s. The master plan envisions a township which is at least three times bigger than the neighboring planned Salt Lake City. Most of New Town is in North 24 Parganas district. It was declared as a part of the Kolkata Metropolitan Area in August 2016 by Governor of West Bengal (www.hidco@2020 – New Town Kolkata).

New Town was declared as a *Solar City* by the former UPA-led Government of India and later this city was declared as *Smart Green City* by NDA-led Government of India with the help of Government of West Bengal following a proposal submitted by Mamata Banerjee (Chief Minister of West Bengal) but later withdrawn from the Smart Cities Mission after the AITC-governed Bengal government decided to withdraw all cities of West Bengal from the competition. It has rejected ₹1,000 crore to be given for development of the city as smart city. New Town has a proposed area of 93.9 km² in which 30.8 km² is used for township and 60.354 km² area is under planning. The township of New Town is divided into Action Area I, II, III and a Central Business District. The erstwhile planning area of HIDCO also included Action Area - IV (still not started). The Central Business District (CBD) is located between Action Area - I & II. HIDCO installed the geographic information system (GIS) to integrate the database on the number of house owners, property tax, mutation, building construction etc. in New Town (www.hidco@2020 – New Town Kolkata).

Through smart drives initiatives in New Town, it is now a **uni-world** city with townships or residential projects sponsored by Shapoorji Pallonji Shukhobristi, Merlin Rise. It is considered as one of the **skill cities**. Launched by Ambuja Neotia group and HDFC group in 2023, it is a 72-acre township with an investment of ₹550 Crores. The township will have Nursing College, Hospital, Para medical College, IT/ITes space, Residential Towers, Villas and Club house with 25% reserved for economically weaker sections. New Town is emerged as a **technological hub** of Kolkata. New Town has emerged as the second IT hub of Kolkata after Salt Lake. Growing number of tech parks makes New Town a preferred destination for IT and ITes in East India. Several Information Technology majors are operational like Ericsson, Accenture, Capgemini, Tech Mahindra, ITC Infotech, Mindtree, Adani Labs, British Telecom, TCS, Wipro, Infosys, Cognizant Traditional Packers & Logistics New Town etc. New Town also houses Bengal Silicon Valley Tech Hub. With the development of **financial hub** of the area Fintech hub is developed in New Town by HIDCO with many national and international firms like PNB, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and SBI showing interest in the project with their investment in different stages of implementation. With the rise of **Hotel hospitality and management business** many luxurious hotels like Fairfield by Marriott, Novotel, Ibis, Taj Hotels, Westin Hotels & Resorts, The Park Hotels, Holiday Inn, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Lemon Tree Hotels, Ozen Mansion Kolkata etc. have also come up in the area. New Town has well **connective roads and rapid transit** (www.nkdamar.org – New Town Kolkata Development Authority West Bengal (Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation)).

Biswa Bangla Sarani connects Action Area I and II. It also connects New Town to the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport. The New Town Road and Gitanjali Road also serves as major connectors between Action Area III and Action Area II. The main mode of road transportation includes AC or non-AC government and private buses, taxi and other popular Indian transports like auto rickshaw and e-rickshaws. As of 2015, around 300 buses on 25 different bus routes, either passes through or originates from New Town. **Kolkata Metro Orange Line**: As of November 2023, the New Garia–Dum Dum/Kolkata Airport Line of the Kolkata Metro, which passes through New Town, is under-construction and expected to be open before 2026. The metro will be main linkage between Action Area I and II of New Town township. A Light Rail Transit System (LRTS) is planned to connect Action Area III to the Biswa Bangla Gate. The estimated cost of the project



is around ₹4500 Crores. New Town has a good **educational hub** and some of the educational and training institutes that are setting up their campuses in New Town. To ensure **smart governance digital and app-based services** were introduced for implementation of e-governance portals for citizen grievances, utility bill payments and automated public bicycle-sharing systems. **Sustainable waste management** includes 100% source segregation of wet and dry household waste, supported by block level collection and processing units like biomethanation plants. The town has **well connectivity** with city wide underground power cabling, extensive fibre-optic networks, public EV charging stations and solar power integration. Focus has been given in **environment** and green-rated urban centre were developed featuring extensive urban parks, electric buses and advanced stormwater capture systems (www.nkdamar.org – New Town Kolkata Development Authority West Bengal (Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation)).

IV. Smart Governance – Proponents of Neo-Liberal Scholars

Neo-liberalism is a political and economic philosophy that argues human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. When applied to politics and administration, neo-liberalism completely redefines the role of the state, shifting it from a provider of public welfare to a manager of market efficiency.

Neo-liberal proponents view smart cities as market-driven forces of economic growth, efficiency and technological innovation. They believe that complex urban problems like traffic, energy use, waste are best solved through corporate-led data platforms and digital infrastructure rather than long-term state planning (www.EScienceDirect.com – smart cities: utopia or neo-liberal ideology). Advocating for the outsourcing of municipal services to private technological giants and venture capital, farming private procurements as essential for urban competitiveness (www.http://osf.io – the neo-liberal logic of citizen focused smart citizen-focused smart cities). Transforming city administrations to act like corporations, competing globally for capital talent and supra-national funding. Redefining urban residents as individual users or consumers who interact with the city via apps and feedback loops rather than political actors with collective social rights (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities). Neo-liberal scholars focused on **technological solution, public-private partnership (PPPs), entrepreneurial governance, and consumer-citizen model** in the making of smart cities. Sociologist like Rob Kitchin, Alberto Vanolo, Ayona Dutta focus on how corporate-led technological solutionism reshapes urban citizenship and governance.

Neo-liberal view the smart city not as a revolutionary utopia, but as an extension of neo-liberal ideology and market driven urban restructuring and governance. It focuses on market-led solutions, corporate interests, instrumental citizenship, distraction from systemic issues (www.EScienceDirect.com – smart cities utopia or neoliberal ideology).

Market-Led Solutions – Scholars argue that smart cities favour business-led technological fixes over long term political and structural urban planning.

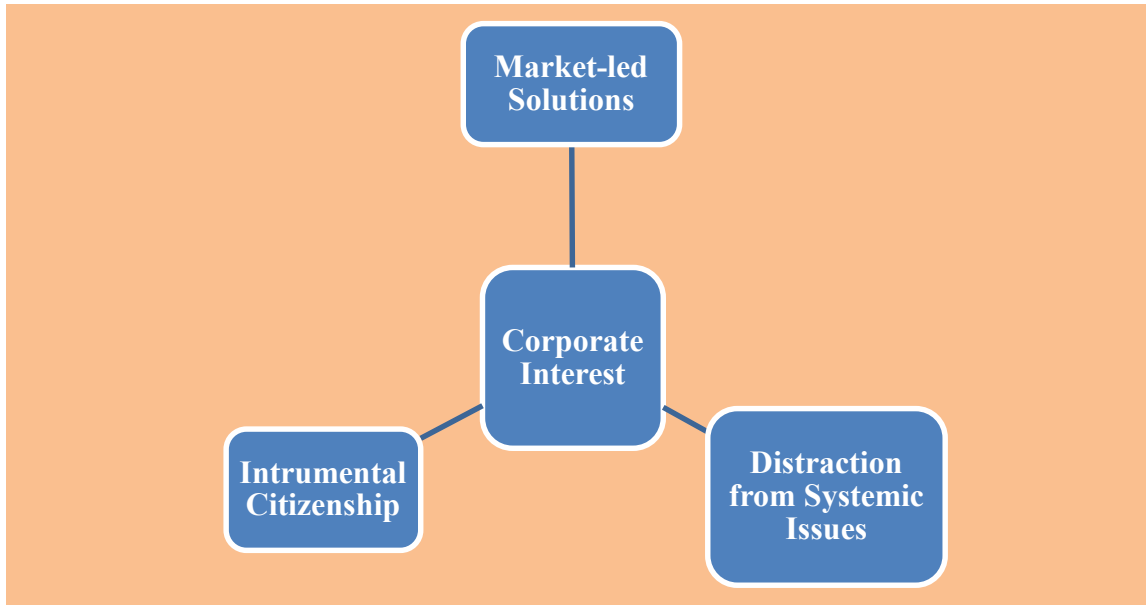
Corporate Interests – The model prioritises the economic goals of business elites and technology corporations rather than addressing deep-seated social challenges like poverty or rapid urbanization.

Instrumental Citizenship – Instead of fostering political rights and the common good, smart urbanism reduces residents to consumers or passive data providers within a corporate framework.

Distraction from Systemic Issues – Focusing on quantitative big data and superficial behavioural nudges diverts attention from urgent needs like infrastructure reform and social equity (www.EScienceDirect.com – smart cities utopia or neoliberal ideology).



Neo Liberal Idea of Smart City



Smart Governance can be understood with an a) overall approach (city-wide), b) particular strategies (varied scale), and c) tactics and techniques (more local form of intervention).

City wide approach - focus on coalescence, practicality and involvement. They suggest increased citizen awareness and policy integration as two key determinants of good smart city governance encompassing rural areas in India through cognitive mapping of citizens through educations to gain public trust in the smart governance pathway (www.EScienceDirect.com – smart cities utopia or neoliberal ideology).

Varied scale approach - focuses on human-oriented planning with increased public participation focuses on ethical and legal awareness regarding privacy and cybercrimes and data driven decisions and support system.

Local Approach - Local form of intervention is largely driven by data-oriented technologies and digital urbanism like smart technology or ICT (Information and communication technology), while acknowledging that the present realities of Indian cities pose important challenges in achieving this due to lack of awareness among public and lack of technical skills. There is a need for technological adoption of smart services for the public backed with technology-driven interventions in governance pathways like e-governance, engaging citizens through collaborative organisations and removing the smart-city vulnerabilities (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities).

According to neo-liberal scholars the domain and structure of public administration has been substantially influenced by globalisation and growth of capitalism. Citizens have become so important in the process of governance. With extensive globalisation and integration of economies, there has been a change in the role of government (www.smartcities.gov.in).

While the welfare and security of citizens was always the motive of administrators, citizens did not have much direct involvement earlier. With increasing exposure of citizens to market mechanism, it becomes inevitable to facilitate their involvement in governance, thus moving towards open government. The objective behind open government is that more government increase their transparency, accountability and responsiveness towards their citizens with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of governance, as well as the quality of citizen services. Such approach demands for a substantial shift in norms and culture to ensure genuine dialogue and collaboration between the governments and civil society. With such vision, a global open government partnership (OGP) has been formed to strengthen the collaborative efforts of the



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state in establishing a sustainable open government. The first meeting was held in New York in 2011 with 11-member countries. At present 63 countries are contributing in the partnership. Other developing nations like India should grab such opportunities to strengthen the policy platform for upcoming smart cities and attain substantive democracy (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities).

V. Making of Smart City: - Neo-Liberal Administration –Citizen Participation in Governance in New Town Kolkata

Rapid urbanization has brought forward many challenges including increased energy demand, tremendous waste generation, stress on existing infrastructure and resources, safety and security threats, increasing pollution levels, technology dependence etc. Fortunately, the last two decades have brought an enormous innovations and affordable technologies in the domain of communication and computing. City planners are thus making efforts to exploit these technological advancements to mitigate several challenges and develop sustainable, resilient, comfortable and citizen centric cities – the smart cities (Chatterjee,S,2017:189-209). The rise of smart cities would serve as the culmination of globalization, capitalism and consumerism. At this stage, an extensive involvement of citizens in public administration is a must to ensure sound governance. Thus, well-coined collaborative mechanisms and organizations for citizen involvement must be put into place in time for a chaos-resilient smart city environment (www.mygovindia.in- citizen interaction for smart city).

In making smart city neoliberalism alters the relationship between the citizen and the state, reshaping policy priorities. Neo-liberalism has its impact on administration too. In public administration, neo-liberal ideas manifested as New Public Management (NPM) (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities). This approach argues that the government should be run like a private business. Key principles include: -

Marketization – Introducing market competition into the public sector like making public schools compete for funding based on enrolment or performance (ibid).

Privatization – Transferring state owned enterprises (like water or electricity, transportation, or telecoms) to private corporations to increase efficiency (ibid).

Outsourcing and Contracting – Government agencies stop providing services directly. Instead, they contract private companies or non-profits to handle things like prison management, waste collection, or IT services (ibid).

Performance Criteria – Shifting public sector accountability from strict adherence to administrative rules to hitting measurable targets key performance indicators (KPIs), and cost-cutting goals (ibid).

Decentralized Goal – The idea that government should set policy and goals (steering) but let private entities or decentralized agencies execute the actual work (rowing).

De-regulation – Reducing state intervention in the economy this includes lifting restrictions on business, weakening labour unions and removing barriers to foreign investment. Individuals are viewed less as political citizens with collective rights and more as rational consumers who make choices in the marketplace (ibid).

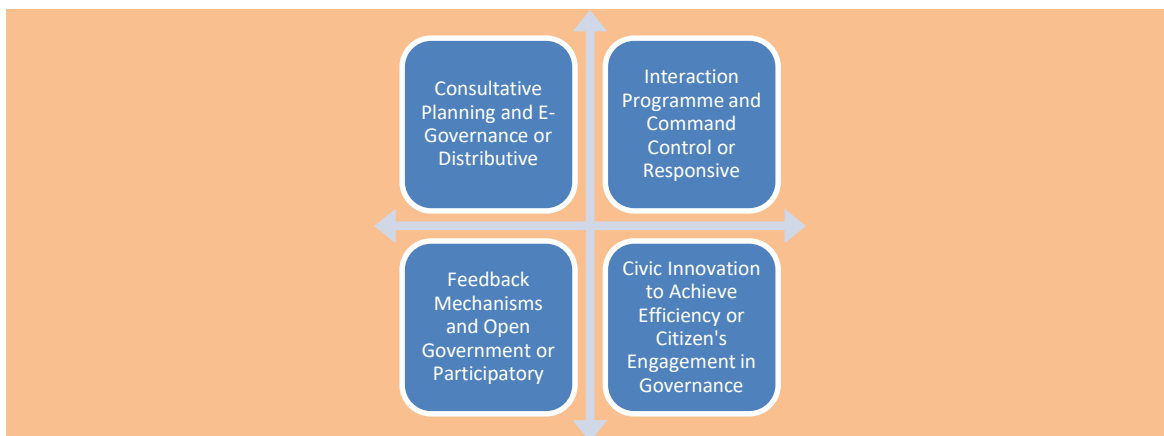
Technocratic Governance – Shifting decision making power away from elected democratic bodies to unelected, expert led institutions (like independent central banks, international trade bodies, or regulatory commissions) to insulate economic decisions from political pressure (ibid).



Neoliberal Administration



Citizen Participation in Governance in Smart City NTK



Consultative Planning and E-Governance or Distributive – NKDA organizes direct interaction programs, public meetings and workshops – such as face-to-face sessions at various housing societies and open house brainstorming events to gather innovative ideas and feedback from residents for future planning and as a supportive measure of e-governance (www.nkdamar.org – New Town Kolkata Development Authority West Bengal (Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation)). Major initiatives like the smart city proposals heavily rely on public crowdsourcing, where citizens submit their visions, goals and low-cost smart solutions via digital platforms like MyGov and social media channels. The backbone for implanting intelligence in various city attributes and services is based on the philosophy of data sharing in real time, using ICTs, through customized secured networks between clients, city administration and public and private sector organizations. Governance mechanisms and systems shall also exploit these developments to bridge the gap between administration and citizens and fosters the concept of open government. Multiple service kiosks spread across the cities,



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aims in providing all citizen services under a single roof. The introduction of Web and mobile phone-based services in the domains of banking, rail ticketing, etc. has already been substantiated as revolutionary development towards customers ease (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities). Land record management, digital services, online service request delivery, digital lockers services through mobile application would make smart city governance dynamic and citizen friendly. Incorporating similar platforms for other administrative and policy driven services, and strengthening e-governance would ensure substantive values. Also, the entire channel of governance would be shortened to establish high level of transparency (www.mygovindia.in- citizen interaction for smart city).

Interaction Programme and Command Control or Responsive – New Town Development Authority have started citizen interaction programme from 2015 onwards till now through face to face interaction with citizens at different housing societies for innovative ideas from citizens (www.mygovindia.in- citizen interaction for smart city). Community engagement involving residents in decision making process regarding development projects fosters a sense of ownership and ensures the needs of the community are met. Clear communication from authorities about development plans and progress builds trust and encourages citizen participation in making sustainable and rapid development in this attractive city.

Civic Innovation to Achieve Efficiency or Citizen's Engagement in Governance – Citizen participation in governance in New Town, Kolkata primarily occurs through digital platforms, community interactions and administrative portals facilitated by the New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA). Residents use the official NKDA website and the single-window “One NKDA” system to pay property taxes, settle utility bills, assess downloadable civic reports, and submit online applications or forms. Local housing committees and resident welfare groups act as primary conduits for channeling community-level demands and coordinating local civic maintenance (www.nkdamar.org – New Town Kolkata Development Authority West Bengal (Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation)). Citizen engagement features comprise of integrated interactive elements like online forms for service requests, feedback submission and grievance redressal. To enhance citizen's participation community boards were set up to encourage citizen participation in local governance, offered subscription options for newsletters or updates on upcoming events and initiatives. NKDA not only provides information but also fosters engagement, transparency and convenience for the residents of New Town Kolkata.

Feedback Mechanisms and Open Government or Participatory – The civic administration incorporates instant messaging, responsive customer support systems and chatbots for quick query resolution and complaint lodging. NKDA launched a revamped website [nkdamar.org](http://www.nkdamar.org) to better serve its citizens. They partnered with WEBSTEP, a renowned web development company to enhance the digital platform. The objective was to create an intuitive, informative and interactive website that caters to the diverse needs of New Town's residents like provides comprehensive up to date information about NKDA's services, future developmental roadmap of upcoming projects and urban development policies (<http://journals.sagepub.com> – the neoliberal logic of citizen-focused smart cities).

VI. Conclusion

The concept of smart cities extends beyond the integration of technological systems, it is a social process where technology, governance and citizenship are mutually constructed. Sociologically it explores the socio-technical production mechanisms of smart cities within digital urbanism. Digital platforms and urban brains reshape governmental governance logic, public service delivery methods and citizen participation spaces. The study reveals that the deployment of these technologies often becomes embedded in existing power structures leading to issues such as “data bureaucratization”, “superficial participation”, and “digital exclusion” (Chatterjee and Kar,2015). True smart cities should transcend instrumental rationality and shift towards citizen-centric “responsive governance”, emphasizing transparency, inclusiveness and techno-democracy. Future smart city development must prioritize justice-oriented responsive governance over mere technical efficiency ensuring that digital urbanization serves democratic ends rather than automating inequality. The proponents of smart cities are focused on bridging the existing gaps between policy and practice, exploring ways to achieve a digital turn in Indian



cities. The rise of smart cities would serve as the culmination of globalisation, capitalism and consumerism (www.smartcities.gov.in).

At this stage, an extensive involvement of citizens in public administration is a must to ensure sound governance. Thus, well-coined collaborative mechanisms and organizations for citizen involvement must be put into place in time for a chaos-resilient smart city environment. Studies on New Town's smart city evolution note that participatory mechanisms' can sometimes function as top-down, one-way information flows rather than decentralized decision-making. Critiques highlight that engagement channels often favour affluent or tech-literate residents, occasionally overlooking the specific needs of vulnerable or lower-income fringe populations.

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