Smart-Wise Inclusive Cities in India

An E.P.S.R.C. funded 'Smart Cities in the Global South' Project

This project investigates how smart city technologies drive rapid urban change and transformation. Generally, smart city technologies can be powerful and innovative. They can also disrupt economies and societies, with risks of power grabs, land grabs, data grabs, and new patterns of inequality and exclusion.

Smart technologies also bring opportunities for 'Smart-Wise Inclusive Cities'. This 'smart-wise' model aims to manage new technologies for social goals – social inclusion, anti-poverty, anti-corruption, sustainable business, and open governance. The scope includes –

- 'Smart cities' – understanding new digital technologies, and the effect on social and economic change.
- 'Inclusive cities' – cities which respond to issues of inequality, exclusion, unemployment, etc.
- 'Wise cities' – avoiding the negative effects of 'smart', and building the 'collective urban intelligence', so that urban technology systems can benefit the whole of society.

The Synergistic Toolkit helps to explore the 'smart-wise' model, not only as a technical system, but as creative human experiences, values and cultures. Overall, the project explores three main research questions –

- How are smart city systems changing the economy and society of Bhubaneswar?
- What are the side effects, positive and/or negative?
- Is there an alternative 'wise city' model, and which pathways could lead towards it?

Bhubaneswar was chosen due to its status as India's premier smart city. The project has strong policy links to the Indian National Smart Cities Mission, the EU Green Digital Charter of Eurocities, and smart city initiatives in UK, particularly in Greater Manchester. It also has research links to areas such as urban studies, transition / innovation studies, socio-technical systems analysis and creative ethnography / futures / foresight.

Overall the project is a pilot and test-bed for the synergistic methods. With the final report, we aim to scale up the methods for a global research program, with major funding from UK / EU / international sources.

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