Will Smart Cities 'Digest' Poverty?

(Source- http://scroll.in/article/735631/in-a-slum-fire-outside-delhi-the-frightening-vision-of-a-future-smart-city)

In This Issue

Lead Essay

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Introduction: Smart City Mission

With the aim of driving economic growth and to improve the quality of life of people by enabling local area development and harnessing technology, especially technology that leads to Smart outcomes, NDA government introduced the Smart City Mission on June 2015. Accordingly, it is expected that the area based development will transform existing areas (retrofit and redevelop), including slum, into better planed ones, thereby improving livability of the whole City, facilities will be developed to accommodate the expanding population in urban area, use of technology, information and data to improve infrastructure and services and comprehensive development will be made to improve quality of life, create employment and increase income for all including poor and disadvantaged and finally leading to inclusive Cities[1]. Capturing the spirit of competition and cooperative federalism, the mission will select 100 cities, which will be selected using the completion method[2] for funding and using a strategy of area-based development.

According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, cities have the strength to digest poverty and the digestive ability of the cities should be increased to make it faster and wider to follow economic prosperity[3]. Moreover he also mentions Smart Cities will provide sufficient water, electricity, cleanliness, traffic management, decent housing for all, solid and liquid waste management, emergency services, coupled with technology to make life easy and comfortable for all. But how far the Smart cities will reduce the basic problems like, poverty and deprivation of the people living in the cities?

Urban Deprivation in India

Cities and towns in India are on the one hand, emerging as sites of hope and despair for millions of people and on the other hand, home to vast numbersof undercounted and helpless deprived citizens. Census of India 2011, for the first time provides evidence for a larger absolute increase in urban population than rural. Yet it is also observed that in Census 2011, the number of census towns has also gone up by 2774 just in one decade, which is unprecedented in the history of the Indian census (Kundu, 2011a). Hence, the relatively slow actual rate of urbanization, rural-urban migration accounts for a rather small part of urban population growth, and migration trends appear to have further slowed in recent years (Coelho et. al 2012) and the exclusionary urban climate, which has discouraged the entry of prospective migrants and poor people (Kundu, 2011b), have made the poverty in Indian cities a more complex concept. Slums and squatter settlements are manifestations of poverty in Indian cities. The complex and interlocked spatialities of poverty in expanding cities in terms of eviction, demolition, gentrification, settlement and resettlement are also some other classic characteristics of poverty in urban context. The next important issue of poverty in cities is the relationship between size of the cities and poverty. The report of the High-Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) (2011) points to the fact that urban deprivation is higher in small cities than that of the metros. It also discusses that due to the weak economic base and high incidence of poverty, the internal capacities of the small cities are also less than the bigger metros in India.

Moreover, the poverty in contemporary cities has been aggravated by the insecurities in terms of settlement and access to urban infrastructure. HPEC (2011) mentions about much larger "shelter poverty" than income poverty in Indian cities. According to this report, shelter poverty in Indian cities is the result of the heavily distorted land markets, a

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[1] http://smartcities.gov.in/writereaddata/smartcityguidelines.pdf Date Accessed : 19/08/2016

[2] Each State/UT will have a certain number of potential Smart Cities, with each State/ UT having at least one. Each aspiring city competes for selection as a Smart City in what is called a 'City Challenge'. There are two stages in the selection process. After the number has been indicated to the respective Chief Secretaries, the State/UT will undertake two steps, *viz.* **Shortlisting of cities by states and the challenge round for selection**. In the second stage of the competition, each of the potential 100 Smart Cities prepare their   proposals for participation in the 'City Challenge'. This is a crucial stage as each city's Smart City Proposal is expected to contain the model chosen, whether retrofitting or redevelopment or greenfield development or a mix thereof, and additionally include a Pan City dimension with Smart Solutions.

[3] http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/treat-urbanisation-as-opportunity-not-calamity-pm-116062500670_1.html Date Accessed: 19/08/2016

Lead Essay

highly inadequate regulatory regime of protecting property rights, and absence of a well-crafted strategy for inclusion of economically and socially weaker sections in urban planning.Census of India 2011 shows that, level of urbanization increased from 27.81 percent in the 2001 Census to 31.16 percent in the 2011 Census and on the other hand, the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19 percent in 2001 to 68.84 percent in 2011 census.

When an economy starts developing, cities become more attractive for the people living in the countryside. Economic development directly affects the life of the people living in cities as most of the sources of development are concentrated in the cities. Increasing standard of living of the urban people also increases the cost of living in the urban areas. The rural people also migrate to the city expecting better jobs and better living standards, which add to the natural increase in the population and finally results in further increase in the urban population. Both increased standard of living and increased population growth in the city ensures urbanization.

From development point of view, urban growth has been seen from both positive as well as negative perspectives. On the negative side, the growth of slums adversely impact infrastructural development and increases deprivation of the city dweller, whereas on the positive side, cities are regarded as the "engines of growth" (Dwivedi, 2007). The problems like slum formation, congestion, pollution and urban poverty can be regarded as the negative externalities[4] of urbanization.

Globalization and trade liberalization have highlighted the economic potential of cities in terms of share in economic growth but the distributional impact of growth is less known. For example in cities like Mumbai, fifty percent of the people are either slum dwellers or homeless, but they occupy only six percent of the city's land area (Swaminathan, 1995). According to World Bank estimates, 53 percent of total world population lives in urban areas in 2014[5]. Depending on the individual countries and cities, between 40 and 80 per cent of urban dwellers in the world are living in poverty, with very little or absolutely no access to shelter, basic urban services and social amenities[6].

Another aspect of Indian urbanization is the structural change in the economy with the continuing linearization policy, which increases the contribution of industry and services to GDP more than that of the agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to GDP growth in 2013-14 was 4.2 percent, which decreased to 1.1 percent in 2015-16, contribution of industry increased from 5.0 to 7.3 percent and for service sector 7.8 to 9.2 percent during the same time period (Economic Survey, 2015-16). However the benefit gained by the marginalized section from this industry and service sector is clearly meagre which is also manifested in the increasing inequality[7] in urban area.

Implication of the Smart Cities to reduce deprivation and poverty in Urban India

Taking note of the rate of urbanization in India and the externalities coming out from these related to the quality of life of the vast majority living cities, Smart Cities which basically includes digitalization and new business model of urbanization is of little hope. Bardhan (2016) mentions that the Smart Cities Programme, which includes initiatives of digitization, IT etc. have never helped the Indian cities to make them livable for the majority of the population[8].The strategic components of Area-based development in the Smart Cities Mission are city improvement (retrofitting), city renewal (redevelopment) and city extension (greenfield development) plus a Pan-city initiative in which Smart Solutions are applied covering larger parts of the city. But all these initiatives hardly mention the present urban deprivation in the contemporary cities of India. Nevertheless the Greenfield development initiative includes the

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[4]In economic term, an externality is the external effect of production or consumption by one agent on the production or consumption of another agent.

[5] Urban population refers to people living in urban areas as defined by national statistical offices. It is calculated using World Bank population estimates and urban ratios from the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects.

[6] Poverty in cities of the developing world can be characterized by large and growing backlogs in delivery of basic services, the worsening state of access to adequate shelter, health problem, lack of participation of communities in decision-making processes and vulnerable sector among women, children and youth.

[7] Inequality can be defined as the poverty in relative term.

[8]http://thewire.in/50661/pranab-bardhan-transcript/. Date Accessed: 23/08/2016

Lead Essay

provision for affordable housing for the poor, which is expected to address the needs of the expanding population. But how far it will meet the huge shelter deprivation in Indian cities is doubtful.

Saskia Sassen the author of "Global Cities" points out that a 'too smart' city; with a single-minded use of technology based on infrastructure optimization will widen inequality. According to the mission, urbanization should be taken as an opportunity to generate wealth and prosperity and these are expected to trickle down to the poor and marginalized living in the cities. But in reality this mission excludes those who do not fit into the vision of a smart city as it has been promoting rapid regional urbanization by speculating and monetizing on the commons, land which belongs formally or informally to farmers and tribal, who have used it for generation and transforming it into real estate[9].

Conclusion

Although Smart City Mission is an ambitious step taken by the present government establishing the PM Modi's idea of "to think big and focus on skill, scale and speed to revive India's growth story"[10], but it can't be expected to reduce the present deprivation of the city dwellers. Reforms made in the name of India's smart cities agenda have facilitated a private takeover of public space as the public fund is inadequate for smart city transformation, which widens the present inequality and the gap between rich and poor and finally aggravates the negative externalities of trade liberalization.

In essence the smart progressive city needs the input and contribution of all classes and groups of people, and cannot simply be labeled as smart by adopting a sophisticated information technology infrastructure. Cities are more than just wires and cables, smart offices, trendy bars and luxury hotels, and the vast number of people who live in cities deserve more than just these things. Because the smart city label can work to ideologically mask the nature of some of the underlying changes in cities, it may be a partial impediment toward progressive urban change. Real smart cities will actually have to take much greater risks with technology, devolve power, tackle inequalities and redefine what they mean by smart itself, if they want to retain such a lofty title.

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[9] http://theconversation.com/will-indias-experiment-with-smart-cities-tackle-poverty-or-make-it-worse-53678 . Date Accessed 23/08/2016
[10] Ibid

Lead Essay

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Headlines

The Surrogacy Bill Is Just Homophobia and Bigotry In The Name Of Protecting Women
(Sandip Roy, *The Huffington Post,* August 25, 2016)

Sushma Swaraj might have the best intention in the world – to protect the rights and well being of surrogate mothers. But the Surrogacy Bill as proposed by the government is just homophobia and bigotry disguised as surrogate welfare. Actually, not that disguised either. The Foreign Minister was quite up front about why only married couples could avail of surrogacy. Gays, single persons, live-in couples are not welcome.

Read More: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2016/08/25/the-surrogacy-bill-is-just-homophobia-and-bigotry-in-the-name-of/
Date Accessed: 26.8.2016

Economy

Japan Shows How To be Prosperous Despite Economic Deflation
(Jonathan Power, *thewire***, August 26, 2016)**

Lund, Sweden: The announcement was made on August 15 by Japan's finance ministry: in the last quarter of the year the Japanese economy grew at an annualised rate of 0.2%. "One wonders if the economy will remain at a standstill for the rest of the year", the Financial Times asks.But then Japan's economy has been becalmed for 30 years. Even though the government has poured billions of dollars into the economy it has had only a small effect in boosting demand.

One wonders when the government will give up and what happens then – another decade of minimal growth? If that is what happens how much does it matter?

To the Japanese themselves it seems not that much. By and large they are contented with their lot. The rest of the world may be worried as a powerful country is importing less and less. It does not contribute to world economic growth as it did before when its fast growing economy progressed at Chinese rates from a much higher base.
Read More: http://thewire.in/61907/japan-shows-how-to-be-prosperous-despite-economic-deflation/
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

How Technology is Upending Modi's Monumental Plans to Create Millions of Jobs
(Nikhil Inamdar, *thewire***, August 23, 2016)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi alluded, yet again, to the creation of jobs in his Independence Day speech, an economic priority that he has underscored on almost every occasion, both in speeches and at events over the past two years.

"As the scope of work expands, the possibilities of employment generation also increase… today, we have stressed in that direction," he claimed, pointing to India's credentials as the largest manufacturer of vehicles, leading exporter of software and home to the world's most ambitious public sanitation programme that has purportedly led to the construction of two crore toilets under his regime.

All of this, coupled with investments in new factories that the prime minister seemed to suggest in his speech, has led to employment generation and new job opportunities for India's 800 million who are under the age of 35.

Read More: http:thewire.in/61121/man-vs-machine-how-technology-is-aggravating-modis-monumental-job-creation-challenge/
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

Bad loans of state-run banks double in 15 months
(*Moneylife***, August 25, 2016)**

The gross non-performing assets (NPAs), or bad loans, of India's state-run banks, measured as a percentage of their advances, have ballooned from 5.4 per cent as on March 2015 to 11.3 per cent 15 months later, as per latest data available with the central bank.

In contrast, such bad loans of private banks and foreign entities in the industry, rose in a relatively less dramatic manner -- from 2.2 per cent to 2.8 per cent for the former and from 3.2 per cent to 3.7 per cent for the latter.

The data was available with Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor S.S. Mundra at a conference on banking sector reforms here.

Read More: http://www.moneylife.in/article/bad-loans-of-state-run-banks-double-in-15-months/47945.html
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

Economy

The government is likely to remove the influence of the British (and Julius Caesar) from its Budget

(Mayank Jain, *The Scroll,* August 26, 2016)

Moving away from the practice borrowed from the British conventions, which, in turn were influenced by the Romans, the Indian government is planning to advance the date of the presentation of the Union Budget from the last working day of February to the end of January. This is one of the several steps that it is contemplating to overhaul the Budget-making exercise. By pushing back the date on which the Budget is presented in Parliament, the government hopes to have the document cleared well before the financial year begins on April 1.

Read More: http://scroll.in/article/814865/the-government-is-likely-to-remove-the-influence-of-the-british-and-julius-caesar-from-its-budget
Date Accessed: 28.8.2016

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

92 Percent of Men in Khaki Complain of Fatigue, Reveals Study
(Neeraj Chauhan, *Times of India*, August 29, 2016)

The study, "Research Study on Fatigue in Police Personnel: Causes and Remedies', conducted by Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital and sponsored by BPRD, said 91.79% police officers felt fatigued. Because fatigue tends to increase irritability and anxiety while diminishing the capacity of officers to make sound decisions, it is likely to increase the probability of officer misconduct, especially misconduct associated with the use of force.

Read more: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/92-of-men-in-khaki-complain-of-fatigue-reveals-study/articleshow/53903298.cms
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

Years of Disconnected Interference, Disregard Has Everything to Do With How Kashmir Is Today
(Sudha Koul, *The Wire,* August 27, 2016)

Kashmir is a problem today thanks to years of rigged elections, interference, hubris, disconnect and a lack of cultural understanding by the Indian government. Of course there are other factors, like a mischievous neighbour (Pakistan), who has equal disregard for the people of the Valley but whispers sweet nothings in its ear. Then there is the growth of international terrorism. It is my belief that the last two have succeeded because of the first.

Read More: http://thewire.in/61101/kashmir-indian-government/
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

DEVELOPMENT

92% of villages 'electrified' have houses without power
(Charley Maloney, *Moneylife*, August 25, 2016)

As many as 78 per cent of the 18,452 inhabitable villages the government set out to provide with power have been "electrified". However, 92 per cent of the 10,072 newly-electrified villages include homes which do not have electricity.

On August 22, 2016, the government issued an update to say that 28 villages were "electrified" the previous week (15-21 August), as part of the ongoing mission to electrify the remaining 18,452 un-electrified villages in India.

Last week, the government missed the quota, as an average of 252 villages must be electrified per week, 36 per day, in order to reach the newly pushed-forward completion target of March 2017. The target set out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was 1,000 days; the live updated government website says the deadline is March 2017, just over 200 days away.

Read More: http://www.moneylife.in/article/92-percentage-of-villages-electrified-have-houses-without-power/47943.html
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

ENVIRONMENT

How a River in Tamil Nadu turned into a sewage canal
(M. Rajasekar, scroll.in, August 29, 2016)

A narrow little rivulet splashes down, bouncing from boulder to boulder as it descends the rockface. It pauses to catch its breath in a tiny pool limned by trees, before rushing downhill again, merging with other streams to form a small river called the Noyyal.

Governance & Development

For centuries, the river's 170-km course used to take it past the farms, forests and villages of Tamil Nadu, before sinking it into the embrace of the great Cauvery.

In recent decades, this landscape has changed.

Noyyal's basin – the area drained by the river and its tributaries – has become one of the densest urban landscapes in the state. The cities of Coimbatore and Tirupur, which are located here, are now among India's leading industrial clusters. The basin has seen an exponential rise in population. Between 1991 and 2011, the number of people living here doubled from 19.5 lakhs to 42 lakhs. With more people settling in the cities, the urban population mushroomed from 9 lakhs to 33 lakhs. Such a large number of people moved to the cities that the rural population actually fell.

Read More: http://scroll.in/article/812450/how-a-river-in-tamil-nadu-turned-into-a-sewage-canal
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

Industrial Revolution kick-started global warming much earlier than we realised
(Helen McGregor, Joelle Gergis, Nerilie Abram, Steven Phipps, *Down to Earth,* August 25, 2016)

In the early days of the Industrial Revolution, no one would have thought that their burning of fossil fuels would have an almost immediate effect on the climate. But our new study, published today in Nature, reveals that warming in some regions actually began as early as the 1830s. That is much earlier than previously thought, so our discovery redefines our understanding of when human activity began to influence our climate.

Read More: http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/industrial-revolution-kick-started-global-warming-much-earlier-than-we-realised-55387
Date Accessed: 28.8.2016

India and World

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Why Turkey went to War in Syria
(Faysal Itani, *Foreign Policy,* **August 24, 2016)**

It's fear of a Kurdish state — even more than the Islamic State. But things could get complicated with Washington supporting Kurdish rebels.

Read More: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/24/why-turkey-finally-went-to-war-in-syria-jarablus-invasion-kurds/
Date Accessed: 27.8.2016

Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

Theresa May's Inequality Audit Seems Clever, But it Will Backfire
(Zoe Williams, *The Guardian*, August 28, 2016)

Theresa May has ordered a government audit into racial disparities in public service outcomes. By 2017, a citizen armed only with his or her age, postcode and racial profile will be able to determine the likelihood of being unemployed, detained under the Mental Health Act, arrested or excluded from school. Inequality is highly abstract and seems to have a momentum of its own, given that it constantly travels in the opposite direction to the one everybody claims to want. This gives it the inevitability of gravity or weather. The academic's answer is to try tethering it back to something concrete and actionable, with demonstrable outcomes: a wealth disparity of X leads to a longevity difference of Y.

Read more: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/28/theresa-may-inequality-audit-conservatives-brexit
Date Accessed: 29.8.2016

The Guardian view on France's 'Burkini Bans': Ugly Politics on the beach
(*The Guardian*, August 24, 2016)

So this is what liberation looks like: four armed officers ordering a woman to undress in public. France's Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, has backed the mayors ordering "burkini bans" on their beaches by arguing, among other things, that the garment is part of the enslavement of women. The photos from Nice, in which a Muslim woman removes her tunic under duress, show that claim of upholding women's rights to be as erroneous as the others advanced in support of the measures – variously, that covering up for religious reasons while at the seaside or while swimming is unhygienic, or a "provocation", or contrary to French values.

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/24/the-guardian-view-on-frances-burkini-bans-ugly-politics-on-the-beach
Date Accessed: 27.8.2016

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