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Empowering Citizens in Smart Cities: Humanistic Infrastructure Management for Inclusive Development

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Abstract

Smart cities are envisioned as urban environments that leverage technology to enhance the quality of life for residents. However, the success of smart cities hinges on more than just technological advancements. To achieve inclusive and sustainable development, a humanistic approach to infrastructure management is imperative. This research article explores the significance of empowering citizens within the context of smart cities through human-centered infrastructure management. It delves into the principles, challenges, and benefits of this approach, highlighting how it fosters community engagement, equity, and social cohesion. The article also presents case studies that exemplify successful implementation and offers recommendations for policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders to ensure that smart cities truly prioritize the well-being and participation of their residents. The connection between civil urban infrastructure and smart cities is strong due to the common goal of fulfilling public service demands. Infrastructure management contributes to the development, evolution, and sustainability of smart cities. The main problem with traditional approaches to the development, evolution, and sustainability of smart cities is the lack of a holistic, integrated vision of infrastructure management. The main objective of this research is to introduce an infrastructure management humanistic approach with a smart city conceptual model that also considers an educational perspective.

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Introduction

Smart cities are characterized by the integration of advanced technologies to optimize various aspects of urban life [1]. However, a technology-centered approach often neglects the human aspect of urban living. This article emphasizes the importance of a humanistic approach to infrastructure management in smart cities to ensure that technological advancements serve the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

Civil infrastructure systems have a major impact on the economic development of a nation, and public demand for infrastructure facilities is constantly increasing. In this context, the implementation of effective infrastructure management practices is critical to fulfilling public service demands. "Infrastructure asset management includes the systematic, coordinated planning and programming of investments or expenditures, as well as the design, construction, maintenance, operation, and in-service evaluation of physical infrastructures and associated facilities. It is a broad process, covering those activities involved in providing and maintaining infrastructure at a level of service acceptable to the public, intended users, or owners" [2].

The concept of a smart city originated in the 1960s and 1970s with the use of databases and aerial photography to collect the data required for cluster analysis in urban planning. The aim was to make well-informed decisions to effectively allocate resources in order to reduce poverty by fostering social and economic growth. As the concept evolved from theory to practice, smart cities sought municipal solutions using new technology and innovative engineering approaches [3]. At present, the concept has been expanded with the development of holistic urban models that involve public enabling, social inclusion, and community engagement in the planning and management process.

Furthermore, the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) mentions that "Restore and improve infrastructure" is one of the 14 Grand Challenges for Engineering in the 21st Century. The challenge is not only in the engineering and management of the technical aspects. A sustainable environment and scalable development of the economy affect the quality of life and overall satisfaction of the people in cities [4]. The smart city concept aims to improve the quality of life of citizens by sustaining a resilient urban environment amidst global challenges and local concerns [5].

It is important to emphasize that the main priority of smart city initiatives is to fulfill the needs of all citizens, and this is only possible with accessible civil infrastructure systems. The authors believe that this



is what makes a city inclusive. An inclusive city should provide a basic supply of public services, quality health and education, decent housing, an efficient transport network, and access to public space and leisure for all citizens [6].

Humanistic infrastructure management

Humanistic infrastructure management involves designing, implementing, and maintaining urban infrastructure with a focus on improving the well-being and inclusivity of citizens. It considers factors such as accessibility, affordability, cultural sensitivity, and community participation in decision-making processes [7].

Empowering citizens for inclusive development

Community engagement: Humanistic infrastructure management encourages active participation of citizens in the planning and design of urban projects. This approach ensures that local knowledge and needs are integrated into the decision-making process.

Equity and accessibility: By prioritizing inclusivity, smart cities can address inequalities in access to services, ensuring that vulnerable populations are not left behind [8].

Social cohesion: Human-centered infrastructure enhances social connections by creating public spaces that facilitate interaction and shared experiences among residents.

Challenges and solutions

Digital Divide: To empower all citizens, efforts must be made to bridge the digital divide by providing access to technology and digital literacy training [9].

Privacy concerns: Balancing data collection for city optimization with citizens' privacy rights requires transparent policies and regulations.

Cultural diversity: Humanistic infrastructure management should respect and celebrate cultural diversity, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach [10].

Conclusion

Smart cities can only achieve their potential when citizens are at the center of development efforts. Humanistic infrastructure management fosters inclusion, equity, and social cohesion, making smart cities



truly livable and empowering for all residents. As urbanization continues to rise, embracing a human-centered approach will be crucial in shaping a sustainable and prosperous future for cities. It is concluded that the main research problem of managing smart cities by using traditional approaches without a holistic infrastructure management vision has been addressed in this research. The research objective of developing an infrastructure management humanistic framework aligned with an integrated multi-dimensional smart city model that emphasizes the role of education was achieved as a result of the blending of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies used to answer the research question. This is a people-centered approach that focuses on the preservation of urban civil infrastructure to enhance the quality of life of the citizens.

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