

**Smart Cities and the Politics of Digital Inclusion in the Philippines and Indonesia**

**John Ray C. Camorongan**  
raycamorongan@gmail.com  
National University  
Clark, Pampanga, Philippines

**Abstract**

Smart city initiatives are redefining urban governance and infrastructure. However, their sustainability depends on achieving digital inclusion and democratic governance. This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the framing and implementation of these principles in Indonesia and the Philippines. Based on policy documents, governmental communications, and media narratives, the research scrutinizes linguistic strategies, power structures, and ideological constructs underlying smart city policies. The analysis reveals that Indonesia's discourse emphasizes digital literacy and citizen engagement through e-governance platforms, positioning digital inclusion as an economic imperative. In contrast, the Philippine approach is characterized by a corporate-driven framework where digital inclusion is portrayed as a technological innovation rather than a fundamental right, and governance practices are dominated by top-down decision-making. These divergent discourses mirror broader socio-political contexts: Indonesia favors state-led digital governance, whereas the Philippines promotes private sector-led innovation. The findings underscore the necessity of ensuring equitable access to digital resources and enhancing public participation in urban governance. Policy recommendations include expanding participatory digital platforms, adopting inclusive ICT policies, and mitigating corporate influence in smart city initiatives. Future research should also examine the lived experiences of marginalized communities further to understand the social implications of digital urban transformations. This study contributes to the literature on smart city development in Southeast Asia and offers critical insights for advancing inclusive and democratic urban governance.

*Keywords: Smart Cities, E-governance, Digital Divide, Democratic Governance, Indonesia, Philippines, Critical Discourse Analysis*