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Twenty Years of Common Service Centers: Promise, Performance, and the Road Ahead

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Abstract:
Launched as the part of National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006, Common Service Centers (CSCs) were designed as ICT-enabled, village level kiosks, that would deliver government and private services to citizens at their doorstep. This article sheds light on its impact, especially after its amendment in 2015 and tries to evaluate how it affected the service delivery up to the last mile. It also focuses on the persistent gaps and shortcomings in the implementation and functioning of the scheme and suggests some policy measures for better digital inclusion and efficient public service delivery.
This article offers a policy and governance revaluation of CSCs through two complementary lenses. First, it conceptualizes Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) as quasi street-level bureaucrats (1), exercising frontline discretion that can widen access but also enhance dependence. Second, it positions CSCs within the political economy of the platform state (2), where public services, private offerings, and data infrastructures converge at the last mile. The analysis revolves around under-discussed dimensions—green governance, linguistic mediation, crisis resilience, youth aspirations, and rights-based compliance under India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act and Rules. The article concludes with a reform agenda that reframes CSCs as accountable community digital commons aimed at building citizen capability over time and reducing digital dependency.

Keywords: Common Service Centres; Digital India; intermediation; street-level bureaucracy; platform state; DPDP; last-mile governance; data-privacy

1. Introduction:

CSCs are citizen access points under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to deliver Government-to-Citizen (G2C) and Business-to-Citizen (B2C) digital services, especially in rural and underserved areas. It is being implemented through CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd., a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) incorporated on 16th July 2009 under the Companies Act, !956.
The Common Service Centers (CSCs) offer a rather simple narrative of last-mile delivery: a de-centralized kiosk working to support citizens to submit forms, receive copies of certificates, get enrolled into programs, and make payments. On that count, the yardstick to measure success would normally remain delivery reach, services being delivered, and the number of transactions made. However, a 20-year outlook would conform to an altogether larger narrative since CSCs do not merely offer services but define the nature of citizen engagement with the state. In many rural areas, CSCs represent the most common 'face' that digital government wears: rules transcends to actions, eligibility criteria are interpreted, portals are navigated, consent and documentation take place there.

This has significance because governance is not only a matter of what schemes and laws provide in writing; it is equally a matter of what the citizen experiences at the point of implementation. The CSC ecosystem brings with it a novel institutional arrangement: that of the frontline implementer as a quasi-private entrepreneur (the Village Level Entrepreneur, or VLE) operating within a public service architecture. CSC 2.0, approved under Digital India in August 2015, had a definite focus on expanding to at least a CSC in each Gram Panchayat and organizing the delivery for most services on a universal technology platform. Today, the national portal indicates a total of 5,67,468 operational CSCs, with 4,41,270 in the rural areas. However, scale does not always necessarily trickle down to uniform experience or protection.

This article argues that a meaningful assessment should focus on a sharper question: Are CSCs evolving into democratic intermediaries that expand citizen agency—or are they institutionalizing a new layer of private intermediary that deepens dependency and reshapes welfare access into a platform-mediated marketplace? To examine the matter, two theoretical approaches are applied (street-level bureaucracy and the political economy of platforms), and in turn, there is the articulation of novel, relatively unexplored categories (green governance, linguistic and cultural mediation, youth aspirations, crisis and resilience, and digital rights within the DPDP regime in India). The final sections reflect on a transformation agenda that emphasizes reliability, accountability, and capacity building, whereby the CSC is merely a transitional step in the acquisition of digital citizenship, and not a permanent alternative.

2. Background:

2.1 CSCs within NeGP's public service vision:

The NeGP vision, besides ensuring the availability of "public services in the locality at affordable prices" and encouraging rural entrepreneurship, was to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, with a focus on the rural population, ensuring that adequate investment in the sector was made, and governance improved through increased delivery of services at the grassroots level.

The CSCs, in this ICT-enabled framework, were planned to act as a "front-end for delivery of government, private, and social sector services" through a single window facility within the NeGP's overall ICT framework comprising "Connectivity (statewide area networks),

CSCs acted as a governance platform and also served as an entrepreneurial platform. The scheme aimed at ensuring local access and used a hybrid approach involving public goals and the entrepreneurial delivery of those goals. The key goals were:

- Offer affordable and premium digital services for e-governance, education, healthcare, agriculture, financial inclusion, & digital literacy programs
- Develop an ICT-assisted self-sustaining last-mile delivery system for both G2C and B2C.
- Empower Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) and encourage rural employment and entrepreneurship.

2.2 CSC 2.0:

CSC 2.0, notified in August 2015, aimed to create a self-reliant network of 2.5 lakh CSCs at the level of Gram Panchayat, offering services on a single platform and a transaction-based service delivery model. A large number of e-services and focus on the consolidation of service delivery are emphasized in the policy language used within the guideline.

The 2022 partnership with NABARD and the Ministry of Cooperation allowed Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) [3] and the Local Area Mobile Platform Scheme (LAMPS) [4] to act as CSCs, and it helped to increase rural banking and agricultural services.

Moreover, the linkage of Common Service Centers (CSCs) with SWAN [5], SDC [6], SSDG [7], BharatNet [8] and e-District portals has made a significant impact on the last-mile delivery of e-governance in the country. With the launch of BharatNet, high-speed broadband connectivity is provided to Gram Panchayats, and this enables CSCs in even remotest areas to act as a trustworthy digital interface, while the e-District portals enable citizens to file requests for certificates, licenses, and other welfare benefits through CSCs itself, eliminating the need to visit district offices, thereby saving time and money. The connectivity provided by SWAN, and application hosting on SDCs, along with the middleware functionality provided by SSDG, provide a fully electronic workflow-based environment wherein applications lodged at CSCs are transmitted electronically and safely to the concerned departments, thereby ensuring faster processing, minimizing manual interfaces, and ensuring standardization of forms and interoperability of databases across departments. This design also ensures and promotes transparency and accountability since it helps generate digital trails and tracks pendency and service delivery on a real-time basis and also enables evidence-based decision making. On a broader socioeconomic plane, this enhances digital inclusion for the rural and marginalized population accessing through assisted services while at the same time also providing job and livelihoods opportunities for those working out of CSCs as Village Level Entrepreneurs.

However, the full potential of this integration is sometimes constrained by connectivity gaps, limited digital skills and delayed process re-engineering in backend offices. Overall, the integration has transformed CSCs into effective front-end outposts of the state's digital infrastructure, advancing the goals of Digital India.

This is a critical transition. "Single delivery technological platforms" are not merely administrative tools but are also state instruments of power because they determine the services that will be delivered through the platforms, the way identity and eligibility will be established and confirmed, the payment mechanisms for the services that will be charged for and the way the data will be recorded and the performance will be monitored. In other words, CSC 2.0 turns CSCs into the ground-level interface of a broader state platform architecture, making people part of the social contract and strengthening the sovereignty of the country.

2.3 Scale Today:

The CSC portal's October 2025 figures report 5,67,468 functional CSCs (rural: 4,41,270; urban: 1,26,198). This national scale is remarkable, but it can lead to variation in: (i) service reliability (connectivity/power), (ii) service diversity (government vs private mix), (iii) fee transparency, (iv) grievance redressal access, and (v) citizen rights protections (data notice/consent). The remainder of the article argues that these are not peripheral implementation issues; they are core governance questions.

3. CSCs as Democratic Intermediaries (and the VLE as Street-Level Bureaucrat):

3.1 Street-level bureaucracy and frontline discretion:

According to street-level bureaucracy literature, front-line public service providers in their day-to-day work practices "make policy" by virtue of discretion exercised within resource limitations and ambiguity (Lipsky, 1980). This classic work by Lipsky calls attention to the significance of interpretation and priorities exercised by front-line public service providers and their management of public demands.

Moving to CSCs, the frontline actor is frequently a VLE—embedded in local social relations, driven by a livelihood model, and operating at the intersection of digital interfaces and bureaucratic requirements. This position creates a distinctive kind of discretion, visible in everyday decisions such as:

- which services are treated as "urgent" or "worth doing today,"

- how eligibility or documentation gaps are interpreted,
- whether citizens are encouraged to apply or discouraged due to perceived complexity,
- how fees and "service charges" are explained, and
- how data consent is presented (or not presented) during transactions.

The theoretical point is not to accuse VLEs of misconduct; it is to admit that intermediation is fundamentally a relation of power. It leads to a hypothesis that the simpler the system is for non-experts, the more room for maneuver the intermediary will have.

3.2 Democratic intermediation:

CSCs could also play a role of a democratic intermediary in at least three ways. Firstly, they can lower transaction costs between citizens. Secondly, they could offer a means of accessing services even if there is a distance between citizens and government offices. Thirdly, if VLEs are trusted, CSCs could make citizens trust government institutions, since they believe the state is accessible.

This goes with the locality-centric vision of the NeGP, as well as the rationale of the BharatNet, an ambitious plan that aims to deliver the benefit of broadband connectivity to the Gram Panchayats in the rural areas with a purpose to create the foundation for digital services like e-governance, e-health, and e-education. In this view, CSCs are not "kiosks" but governance infrastructure.

3.3 Risk of "digital dependency":

The intermediary process, on one hand, increases accessibility, but on the other hand, it leads to digital dependency. The citizens will not get the experience of a digital government in its original form and will not develop the capability to run the simplest system on their own.

Layering becomes problematic in situations where traditional intermediaries (older agents, clerks, typists) are not dismissed but instead reformed into new forms, sometimes within the realm of the CSC, but sometimes in parallel to it as well. The challenge is that technology ends up modernizing public service while maintaining the citizen in a condition of dependence, but this time using new channels and new costs.

In policy-making terms, the goal should be one of assisted autonomy—CSCs as a platform that incrementally lessens dependence via capability expansion rather than as a destination wherein citizens are perpetually dependent on intermediaries.

4. CSCs, Platform Political Economy, and the "Platform State"

4.1 CSCs as a last-mile platform:

Many scholars treat CSCs as the integral foundation of the "platform state," studying CSCs and how government and market-provided services merge at the last mile by using digital platforms effectively. They analyzed CSCs "from below" as a foundation of the platform state in India, underlining CSCs' role in maintaining 'the last mile of government-citizen relationship.'

"Instead of focusing on what services exist," this lens poses questions about "the incentives and data practices that frame these services." CSCs are looking more like a rural "service platform for G2C and B2C services." The institutional question now becomes: "Who controls the incentives, information asymmetries, and protection of citizens on this platform?"

4.2 Commissions and service delivery:

Platform political economy [9] emphasizes the role of incentives as a driver for behavior. Notably, even if the state's intention is to provide welfare benefits, the presence of commission could persuade intermediaries to move into higher-margin activities like insurance, trade, travel, and financial

instruments. The issue with governance is simple: "citizens will often struggle to differentiate between: (i) mandatory requirements for a public service, (ii) voluntary functions, and (iii) commercial offerings that pay a commission."

4.3 Data Privacy?

Although platforms are primarily market infrastructures, they also represent infrastructures of data. CSC transactions encompass identity information, demographic information, addresses, biometric verification, financial information, and even healthcare information. CSCs emerge as an important factor in the data governance structure of the country. The prism of the platform state directs several research questions: "What kind of information is collected and by whom? With how much notice and what safeguards?"

This question becomes even more acute in light of India's DPDP regime, which is addressed below and places a strong emphasis on the right to defend personal data for purposes of lawful processing.

5. "CSCs at 20": Assessment and the Road Ahead:

5.1 CSCs as democratic intermediaries, not merely service kiosks:

Treating CSCs as "kiosks" understates their governance role. Every CSC interaction teaches citizens something about the state: whether processes are legible, whether decisions are contestable, and whether institutions are experienced as helpful or not. The VLE can function as a new kind of street-level bureaucrat, but with a key difference: This role is not necessarily held by a state servant, bound by the rules of the state administration, but by a new actor who operates in a hybrid accountability system.

This therefore implies that reforms in the CSCs must encompass governance standards for service, disclosure, and grievance redressals because trust building or erosion is being created at the "CSC service counter."

CSCs are increasingly providing private services alongside public services, giving rise to a situation where the distinction between citizenship and consumption practices becomes-clouded. In the platform services context, the CSC acts as the 'point of sale' for public services and select services from the marketplace. The debate in policy terms centers not on whether these services should exist, but whether greater transparency and choice is provided to citizens.

5.2 Environmental (green governance) dimension:

Digitization is often celebrated as paperless and efficient, but CSCs reveal the opposite: a distributed infrastructure of printers, scanners, biometric devices, routers, and backups. The green governance dimension is two-sided:

- Potential benefits: CSCs can reduce repeated travel to district headquarters for routine certificates or scheme access, cutting time and cost burdens and reducing transport emissions in remote areas (especially where travel involves multiple trips and uncertain waiting times).
- Hidden costs: Frequent cuts on grid power can lead to inverter/generator dependence; frequent hardware turnover produces e-waste; and consumables (paper, ink) remain significant.

A possible agenda for "Green CSC Guidelines" might include solar support where possible, purchasing energy-efficient devices, and coordinating e-waste management with CSC logistics, aligning the CSCs within the larger context of Green Governance.

5.3 Linguistic and cultural mediation beyond "digital divide":

The digital divide aspect centers on device availability and digital literacy skills. CSCs and VLEs represent another order: that of translation related to language and culture. While government websites may support multiple languages, communication is oral, regional, and a part of bureaucratic culture, often driven by

dialects. VLEs represent translation on two levels: words and meanings, for example, describing what happens next on a form.

This translation technology has the power to empower citizens by ensuring the state's procedures are transparent. However, the technology also has the potential of creating dependence and abusing the system if the citizens are unable to check what has been entered into the system. Policy solutions should include voice-assisted interfaces, local language parity, and citizen confirmations where citizens hear or see a summary of what is being submitted before final submission.

5.4 Youth aspirations, skilling, and migration:

CSCs are often the first visible digital workplace in rural settings. Young people see a neighbour running a tech-enabled enterprise—suggesting that digital livelihoods are possible without migrating. This can shape aspirations in positive ways: motivation to learn digital skills, exposure to online work, and social proof that digital systems can be utilised for employment.

Nevertheless, the CSC sector can also be a low-margin trap if VLE jobs are limited by transactions and commissions. The incomes of VLE communications are irregular and unsustainable in regions of lower demand. New reforms must instead target VLE sustainability by adding diverse revenue streams and support in remote areas, aligning progression pathways across facilitations of basic services and into more valuable roles such as local digital trainer, grievance facilitation specialist, and small business digitization coach. This would convert CSC exposure into broader rural digital capability rather than a static intermediary occupation.

5.5 Resilience and crisis governance:

During crises—pandemics, floods, extreme heat—citizens often need rapid access to information, relief registration, identity and banking functionality, and grievance redressal. CSCs can function as locally trusted points for these needs, but this role is typically ad hoc rather than formally designed. Annual reporting in the CSC ecosystem acknowledges disruption during lockdown periods, reflecting the importance of continuity planning.

A robust approach would integrate CSCs into district disaster management plans with pre-defined service bundles (relief registration, verified advisories, tele-consult referrals), backup power standards, and communication protocols so that CSCs become resilience infrastructure rather than optional extras.

5.6 Digital rights: privacy, consent, and algorithmic fairness under DPDP:

This dimension is rapidly becoming non-negotiable. The DPDP Act, 2023 recognizes the right of individuals to protect personal data while enabling lawful processing. The DPDP Rules, 2025 aim to operationalize the Act through practical compliance mechanisms (PIB, 2025).

There are potential risks of data privacy in the CSC counters. A citizen cannot know: what kind of data is collected, for what reason, who will receive access to it, and what rights they have to withdraw from it. There is a need for the "rights-first CSC" agenda. It entails:

- **Visible and understandable notices in local language:** Privacy and data-use notices should be clearly displayed, easy to comprehend, and provided in local languages to ensure meaningful awareness among citizens. This is particularly important in contexts with diverse literacy levels and linguistic diversity, where English-only or legalistic notices can undermine informed consent and exclude large sections of the population.
- **Minimal-data defaults:** Systems should be designed to collect only the minimum data necessary for delivering a service, with additional data collection disabled by default. This "privacy by default"

approach reduces the risk of data misuse, limits harm in the event of breaches, and aligns with the principle of data minimisation.

- **Consent logs accessible to citizens:** Citizens should be able to view and audit their consent history, including what data was shared, with whom, and for what purpose. Accessible consent logs enhance transparency, accountability, and user control, enabling individuals to revoke or modify consent where required.
- **Clear separation between mandatory data for a service and optional data for marketing:** There must be a clear and explicit distinction between data that is strictly required for service delivery and data sought for secondary purposes such as marketing or analytics. Bundling optional data with mandatory fields undermines genuine consent and can lead to coercive data practices.
- **Grievance Redressal for breaches or misuse:** A robust grievance redressal mechanism should be available to address data breaches, misuse, or unauthorised access. Effective redressal not only provides remedies to affected individuals but also acts as a deterrent against negligent or malicious data practices, strengthening institutional trust.

While government services become more automated, concerns related to algorithmic fairness are also likely to surface within the CSC ecosystem. Even when eligibility decisions and approvals are determined upstream by automated systems rather than by CSC operators themselves, CSCs function as the primary interface through which citizens experience acceptance or denial of services. As a result, CSCs become critical sites for grievance intake, explanation of decisions, and mediation between automated systems and citizens.

5.7 CSCs as community digital commons (and the "dependency paradox"):

Most CSCs are designed as transaction booths. But a 20-year assessment invites a different take:

- CSCs as community digital commons—scheduled hours for women and elders, group digital learning, farmer meetings to check prices and weather, SHG digital accounting support, or guided sessions to understand rights and entitlements.
- This is also the remedy to digital dependency. If CSCs only "do things for people," dependency deepens. If CSCs also "teach people how," capability grows. The end goal should be that a rising share of citizens can complete basic tasks independently, and CSCs increasingly serve advanced or specialized support roles.

6. Implementation Challenges and Governance Risks:

6.1 Reliability and the "working CSC" problem:

A CSC may be "functional" in administrative counts, yet unreliable in daily experience due to connectivity and power instability. It is, therefore, crucial to see the importance of "upstream" infrastructure projects like BharatNet, which seek to offer broadband connectivity to Gram Panchayats in rural areas. In absence of connectivity, citizens face "delays, denied authentications, repeat visits, opportunity costs," which leads to a lack of trust, making "intermediaries stronger" since they "control when the system works."

Reliability data should be tracked and made visible (uptime, rate of failures, time to resolve), and performance metrics should link to support for accountability, not growth.

6.2 Sustainability and incentive volatility:

Models for entrepreneurship can facilitate innovation, but at the same time, they cause variability in earnings. In the context of CSC 2.0, sustainability as a consideration in design enables transaction-oriented

provision for the delivery of services, which is expected to sustain such a framework by way of service volumes and commissions earned.

Even so, volatility may introduce distortions in service ordering. In case the basic G2C services offered are not very profitable and even more so if these services are burden-some from an administration perspective, VLEs may favor those B2C services that offer greater profits. This creates contradictions between inclusion objectives and market incentives, wherein services meant to ensure universal and equitable access risk being deprioritised in favour of commercially attractive offerings. As a result, welfare delivery may increasingly reflect the logic of a platform marketplace, leading to a commercialised experience of public services**,** where access and responsiveness are shaped by profitability rather than need.

6.3 Accountability gaps and grievance redress:

The quality of service can also relate to individual behavior and capacity of VLE. Citizens will experience problems of information asymmetry regarding government charges, allowed service fee, and application processing. In cases of ineffective grievance systems, "exit option" can be limited; citizens cannot easily opt to use an alternative delivery method, given that CSCs are sole local access point.

Reforms should aim at improving standardized fee disclosures, digital receipts, and complaint mechanisms (QR code/WhatsApp/toll free numbers) that can be directly linked to district e-governance cells.

6.4 Cyber risks, impersonation, and fraud ecosystems:

Last-mile digitization can expand fraud opportunities, including impersonation sites and document generation scams that mimic government services. The risk is not only financial; it is also institutional—fraud erodes trust in digital governance and can push citizens back to informal or corrupt channels.

Governance should focus on mandatory cyber training for VLEs, verified service endpoints, and citizen awareness mechanisms at CSCs (posters, SMS confirmations, receipt verifications).

6.5 Gender and social inclusion challenges:

CSCs can empower women as entrepreneurs and users, but barriers persist: kiosk location, social norms, timing, privacy, and safety can demotivate women users. Research on women's CSC entrepreneurship using a capability approach underscores how online platform initiatives can open opportunities while remaining shaped by social conversion factors and constraints.

Policy reforms should focus on establishing women-friendly CSC design (privacy, timing), targeted mentorship, and financing for women VLEs, and community-linked programs to normalize women's access.

7. Reform Agenda for the Next Decade: Reliability, Rights, and Capability

7.1 Reliability:

1. Service Reliability Index: Share data on uptime percentage, average transaction time, failure rate, and complaint resolution times.
2. Connectivity alignment: Align CSC supporting functions with realities of data connectivity offered through BharatNet, minimum bandwidth, and backup routes for low connectivity regions.
3. Operational continuity: Minimum standards for backup power in high-risk areas and crisis-ready protocols.

7.2 Accountability:

1. Mandatory fee disclosure: display the official fees and permissible service charges prominently at CSCs in local language.

2. Digital receipts: default e-receipts (SMS/WhatsApp) that separate government fee, service charge, and optional private service fees.
3. Grievance systems: QR-based feedback, periodic audits and community social audits.

7.3 Rights-first delivery:

The DPDP Act and the DPDP Rules emphasize protecting personal data and building practical compliance. For CSCs, that translates into a concrete "compliance kit":

The DPDP Act and the DPDP Rules emphasize protecting personal data and building practical compliance. For CSCs, that translates into a concrete "compliance kit":

- **Standardized notices and consent scripts:** Standardized notices and consent scripts ensure that information about data collection, purpose, and rights is communicated uniformly across CSCs. This reduces ambiguity, prevents inconsistent practices by VLEs, and supports informed and legally valid consent, particularly in high-volume service delivery settings.
- **Data minimization checklists:** Data minimization checklists guide CSC operators to collect only data strictly necessary for a given service. By embedding this principle operationally, CSCs can reduce over-collection, limit privacy risks, and ensure compliance with the DPDP Act's emphasis on purpose limitation and proportionality.
- **Secure device requirements and patching routines:** Minimum security standards for devices—such as password protection, antivirus software, and regular patching—help address endpoint vulnerabilities, which are a major risk in decentralized service environments. Routine updates and basic cyber hygiene reduce exposure to malware, data leaks, and unauthorised access.
- **Consent logs and citizen access to basic records:** Maintaining consent logs allows CSCs to document when, how, and for what purpose consent was obtained. Providing citizens access to basic records enhances transparency, enables verification or withdrawal of consent, and reinforces user control over personal data.
- **Breach escalation pathways:** Clear breach escalation pathways define who must be informed, within what timeframe, and through which channels in the event of data misuse or unauthorised access. This ensures timely mitigation, regulatory compliance, and accountability, while also helping preserve trust in CSC-enabled service delivery.

7.4 Professionalization: training in AI, cyber hygiene, and ethics:

Government communications increasingly emphasize training initiatives for digital skills and AI literacy in CSC ecosystems. A next-decade strategy should require:

- baseline certification before onboarding as VLE;
- annual refresher training in cyber hygiene and fraud prevention;
- service ethics and non-discrimination modules; and
- AI-assisted tools for accessibility (translation, form guidance), designed with safeguards.

8. Conclusion:

Two decades into the CSC scheme, the success criterion should not merely focus on the number of CSCs being set up, but on the quality of governance emerging out of them. CSCs have succeeded in improving the reach and localized delivery in accordance with the NeGP's local area focus and the Digital India strategy of platform integration in CSC 2.0. However, the very attributes that make CSCs success stories—intermediated human interactions and integration—are potential sources of danger: private intermediary

roles for public services with incentives for delivery, invisibility of rights [10], and dependence on technology.

An agenda of reform in "CSCs @ 20" should focus on the following three outcomes. One is reliability: there should not only be a CSC, but it should also function in a reliable manner. Two is rights: citizens should have access to their data use in a way they understand within the framework of DPDP, and there should be a CSC "counter" where rights are made real. Three is capability: CSCs should assist in decreasing citizen dependence by informing citizens of ways to use basic systems.

If CSCs realize their promise as an accountable community digital common—a transparent, rights-fulfilling, and capability-enabling space—they can build trust in public institutions and enhance digital citizenship. Otherwise, they may become the final mile in the consummation of the platform state where access is mediated, motivations are opaque, and the distinction between the citizen and the consumer continues to dissolve.

End Notes:

1. Street-level bureaucrats: Street-level bureaucrats are individuals who directly engage with the public in their professional roles, serving as the immediate point of contact between government and citizens. These public service workers are instrumental in delivering various services and implementing policies. Their daily interactions shape how government functions are perceived and experienced by the general population.
2. Platform State: "The government as a platform" metaphor is used to describe a new government paradigm that is a way of delivering public services digitally, engaging a community of partners and citizens to co-design and improve public processes and capabilities, or to apply them for the benefit of society. Modern government has been reorganized under the influence of technology, and special resources have become widespread — platforms that provide information and government services.
3. PACS: PAC here refers to Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, vital grassroots cooperative banks in India providing farm loans, inputs (seeds, fertilizer), and services.
4. LAMPS: The Government of India implements various "local area mobile platform schemes" primarily to expand telecom infrastructure to rural and remote areas and to deliver public services via mobile applications.
5. SWAN: A State Wide Area Network (SWAN) is a secure, high-speed data, voice, and video network connecting government offices from state to district to block levels, a key part of India's Digital India initiative to enable e-governance services like online citizen services and inter-departmental communication efficiently
6. SDC: State Data Centres (SDC) are multiple data centres set up in various states of India to provide fundamental IT infrastructure for various e-Governance programs being run as part of National e-Governance Plan of India. The main purpose of these centres is to provide a physical facility for hosting various state level e-government applications similar to what National Informatics Centre (NIC) provides to the national level applications. The SDC project was approved in January 2008 as a part of the National e-Governance Plan.
7. SSDG: SSDG stands for State Service Delivery Gateway, an Indian e-governance system under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) that acts as a central messaging hub, connecting citizens (G2C) and businesses (G2B) to various government services seamlessly, enabling online requests, status

tracking, and efficient data exchange between departments, reducing physical visits and improving transparency.

8. BharatNet: It is the Government of India's flagship initiative to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats through an optical fibre network. Conceived as a foundational digital infrastructure project, BharatNet aims to enable the delivery of e-governance, digital services, and private-sector applications in rural and remote areas. For CSCs, it functions as a critical enabling backbone, supporting last-mile service delivery, platform integration, and real-time transactions.
9. Platform Political Economy: The platform political economy is a framework for analysing how digital platforms (such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Uber, and Airbnb) use data, algorithms, and network effects to reshape power dynamics, economic structures, and governance in society. It scrutinizes how these companies concentrate wealth, influence labour relations (e.g., gig work), and challenge traditional regulatory frameworks.
10. The invisibility of rights arises when citizens experience welfare and public services primarily as discretionary, fee-based transactions mediated by VLEs, rather than as enforceable legal entitlements backed by the state. In such settings, awareness of procedural safeguards, grievance mechanisms, and data rights may be weak, making accountability diffuse and access contingent on intermediated practices rather than rights based guarantees.

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