



Geospatial Vision (or the Lack of it) for Urban India

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Abstract:

There has been a general tendency of a non 'geo-spatial' approach to planning for Urban India, be it at the National or at the lowest level of hierarchy. No concentrated attempts are in place to plan or recommend an urban settlement pattern in the country, spatially. The last such effort by the National Commission on Urbanisation remained recommendatory and not adequately translated onto ground. Urban development, by Constitution, is a state subject. As a result, planning for metropolitan cities and their regions also remains a 'local' initiatives, though having national ramifications. Absence of a Ministry of Regional Development further contributes to a 'non geo-spatial' vision at the National level. Location of SEZs in the country (or in the States) also does not reflect any spatial approach. Though not directly related to urban development, the current debate on creation of smaller states (e.g., Telangana), had a potential to be resolved with geo-spatial technologies. Besides, a general tendency to bypass the time tested approach of Master Planning, which is essentially spatial in nature, is emerging in the form of Master Plans without the supporting Land Use Plans (e.g., in case of Delhi) or in the form of CDPs, which is not only non-spatial, but also non-professional. The scheme of NUIS started with good intentions (towards geo-spatial approach) but was overwhelmed by its 'flagship' cousin, the JnNURM. A geo-spatial vision for Urban India would include, establishment of a Union Ministry for Regional Development at the Centre, bringing 'Metropolitan Planning including the Metropolitan Region Planning' under the Central ambit, prohibition of notification of Master Plans without the supporting Land Use Plan and related maps, synchronization of towns and cities selected under the NUIS and the JnNURM and bringing the CDPs prepared under the JnNURM into the planning framework suggested by the UDPI Guidelines.