

The Rurban Concept Spatial Planning Beyond Boundaries

The Case of the GIZ Land Use Planning
and Management Project in India

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Background

This paper outlines spatial planning as an effective approach for promoting rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. It highlights the fading rural-urban divide and the need for thinking along a rural-urban-continuum. A case in point is the BMZ-funded project “Land Use Planning and Management in India”. It illustrates how spatial planning fosters coordination across sector boundaries and administrative levels for the benefit of the local population.

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Introduction

The relationship between rural and urban areas is changing and the rural-urban divide is fading, with increasing flows of people, goods and services between the two and the emergence of new migratory and livelihood patterns. This is driven in parts by high urbanization rates in many developing countries, and particularly by urban growth in the continuum of rural areas with villages, towns and cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. Boundaries between rural and urban areas are becoming less distinct, and urban and rural characteristics and activities can lead to diverging territorial needs and divides between governance functionalities. In many cases, the lack of infrastructure and services provided in small towns and regional centres prevent these places from unfolding their developmental potential and the possibility of territorial consolidation. Local governments and small towns are usually challenged with higher relative costs of service provision at lower population densities, compared to big cities and metropolitan regions where investment priorities are set by national governments. This creates an urban asymmetry, which again results in strong territorial inequalities in terms of income and poverty distribution.

Realising the full potential of these blurred boundaries is a challenge for policy-makers and planners. Within the context of territorial development, spatial planning and integrated land use management can be used as mechanisms to foster rural-urban interlinkages and promote integrated development. Overcoming the rigid rural-urban dichotomy is also a precondition for the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is firmly integrated into the New Urban Agenda. Territorial development plays an important role in achieving Goal 11: “Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning”. Furthermore, the development of spaces in the rural-urban continuum is of high relevance in achieving Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The Indian Government has recognised the importance of addressing rural-urban interlinkages by launching the National Rurban Mission in 2016. The Rurban Mission is based on the premise that comprehensive development cannot take place unless even the remotest places are developed as growth centres. Therefore, the Rurban Mission provides significant potentials for fostering rural-urban interlinkages. Nevertheless, spatial planning in India is still mostly limited to the urban agglomerations, despite rapid urbanization and peri-urban growth. Consistent and systematic spatial planning at the regional level is therefore an important

contribution to address the increasing spatial complexities of the rural-urban linkage and unlocking the development potentials of urbanization for rural areas.

Blurred lines: Should we still distinguish between the 'rural' and 'urban'?

In the past centuries, population growth occurred primarily in rural regions. However, today that growth is mainly taking place in cities, with more than 50 per cent of the population living in the world's urban centres and projections estimate that this will increase to 80 per cent by 2050, most of which will take place in Asia and Africa (BMZ 2017). Just three countries - India, China and Nigeria - together are expected to account for 37 per cent of the projected growth of the world's urban population between 2014 and 2050. India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million (ESA 2014).

Yet despite the rapid rate of urbanization, about 3.3 billion people continue to live in the rural areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America. While the global debate on urbanization often focuses on big cities, urbanization has actually been happening mostly in the continuum of rural areas with villages, towns and cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. Approximately 1.3 billion reside in provincial towns and small and medium cities, most of which are closely linked to their surrounding rural areas through their economies and labour markets, social networks, culture and the proximate environments they share (Berdegué, Rosada and Bebbington 2013).

It is becoming increasingly clear that traditional definitions of urban and rural are no longer able to capture the complexity of the different land uses and connections between them. Greater access to information technology, better roads, improved education and changing economic realities are increasing the movement of people, goods and services, waste and pollution and blurring the boundaries between urban and rural areas. Migration and settlement patterns are changing as new forms of urban and peri-urban development alter patterns of town and regional development. Urban and rural land uses are no longer mutually exclusive, but instead exist on a continuum of land use types that are increasingly interconnected (Mylott 2009).

The idea that there is a clear divide between urban and rural areas distorts the realities of urban, rural, and the increasingly important peri-urban areas where both urban and rural characteristics can be found:

"[B]eyond the difficulty to find a standard definition, the idea that there is a clear division between an urban and a rural area misshapes the reality of what rural, urban, peri-urban and 'rurban' areas are today. Remote rural areas still exist, but generally the improved access to ICTs, information, and to transportation networks, as well as better educational standards foster the movement of people, blurring the limits of the old rural-urban divide. Changing settlement, more integrated food systems, commuting and migration patterns and new lifestyles contribute to an interface where often population and activities cannot anymore be spatially categorised in a strict manner" (Mercandalli and Losch 2017).

Unfortunately, too often policies fail to adequately address the spatial complexity of these interlinked relationships. The lack of infrastructure and service provision in small towns and regional centers prevent these places from unfolding their developmental potential, e.g. as

regional markets for production, processing and exchange of goods or service centers for the surrounding areas. In order to strengthen the role of small towns and intermediate cities, as well as local and regional dynamics, the potential of these places has to be unlocked by implementing policies that drive structural change and promote investment in these small and medium-sized cities and towns in the rural areas (Mercandalli and Losch 2017). This new territorial reality should be addressed in public policies, as national and local governments play a pivotal role in shaping these change processes and ensuring that future perspectives for (rural) populations are created.

The concept of rurban planning

The “Rurban” Approach in the European Union

In the study of the “rurban”, conceptual development at the European level can be enriching, despite the very different development pathways of Europe and currently transforming regions in Africa and Asia. In the past decades, Europe's landscape has been transformed by territorial changes, which have blurred the traditional distinction between rural and urban areas-considered as separate territories with their own economic activities and ways of life. This led to the rapid expansion of so-called peri-urban areas, a transition zone with a mix of urban and rural land uses and activities, and the creation of large metropolitan regions encompassing rural areas.

The European Union (EU) therefore started using the concept of ‘rurban’, highlighting the fact that today urban and rural land is connected by a range of complex socio-economic linkages (EPRS 2016). Rurban areas are described by the EU as functional regions; thereby introducing variable socio-economic boundaries¹. Previously, regions were defined as independent administrative boundaries.

Since areas today can no longer be classified as solely rural or urban, policy-makers would be able to design more integrated policies that meet the needs of such hybrid areas by making use of the notion of functional regions. In theory, rurban areas are independent from administrative boundaries and form a single socio-economic entity defined by linkages.

The aim of the EU's ‘Rurban’ concept is to:

- Analyse territorial partnership practices for towns/cities and rural areas
- Achieve better cooperation between different actors in developing and implementing urban-rural initiatives
- Promote territorial multilevel governance
- Assess possible economic and social gains from enhanced rural-urban cooperation
- Identify the potential role of urban-rural partnership for improving regional competitiveness and regional governance (Commission 2017: 1).

¹ Generally, the Rurban approach of the EU is more of a general policy approach that is subject to the European principle of the subsidiarity (ERDV, 2015: 41). Jurisdiction is still in the hands of local and regional bodies.

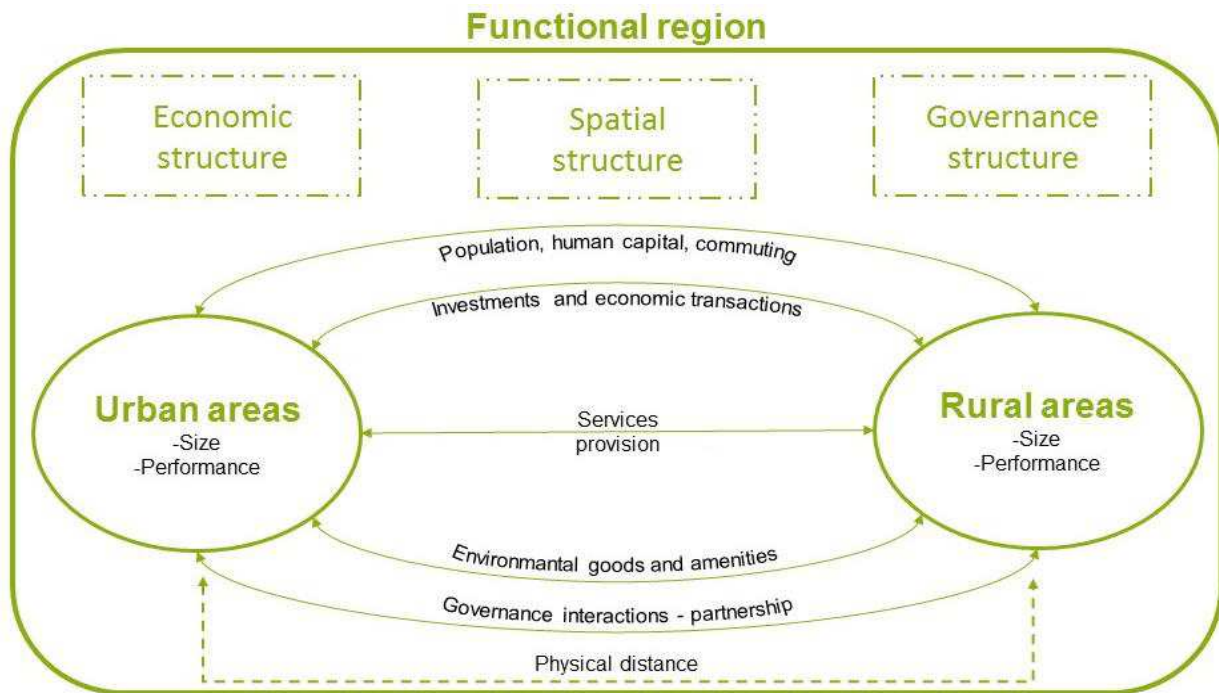


Figure 1: Functional regions within the EU (ERDF 2015: 9)

The Rurban Mission in India

As per the latest Census of India statistics, the rural population in India stands at 833 million, constituting almost 68 per cent of the total population. Large parts of rural areas in the country are not stand-alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, in close proximity to each other. These clusters typically illustrate potential for growth, have economic drivers as well as locational and competitive advantages. These clusters are classified in India as being 'rurban' (SPMRM 2016). The National Rurban Mission, launched in February 2016 by the Indian President, is aimed towards making villages future-proof by stimulating local economic development, enhancing basic services and creating clusters aiming at catalysing overall regional growth.

The Indian Government's rurban approach has the explicit intention of bridging the urban-rural gap. The Rurban Mission, under the Ministry of Rural Development, defines 'rurban' clusters as geographically contiguous villages where the mission provides basic social, economic and digital services. The rurban approach is seen as contributing towards unburdening the urban areas, thereby promoting balanced regional development (MHUPA 2016). The program is however still quite new, and how these rural-urban linkages will play out is not yet known (Sharma and Vora 2017).

The Indian Government wants to achieve the following outcomes through its Rurban Mission:

- Bridging the rural-urban divide with economic, technological services and reducing the lack of basic amenities in villages
- Stimulating local economic development with emphasis on reduction of poverty and unemployment in rural areas
- Spreading development in the region
- Attracting investment in rural areas
- Rurbanization is a key step to bring rural and urban cultures together

(SPMRM 2016: 3-4)

What role does spatial planning play?

This holistic territorial development perspective can be integrated into spatial planning which spans rural and urban areas. Spatial Planning is a process of shaping the built and natural environment around us. It is about the management and development of space in order to create better places, responding to the needs of society, the

Spatial planning is going beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programs, which influence the nature of places and how they function (Okeke 2015).

economy and the environment. In recognition of this reality, a territorial development perspective allows for the possibility of working on both sides of the rural-urban divide (Losch, 2016). Not only is a territory a geographical area, but is also consists of "a set of social, economic, cultural and political processes that include systems of local or locally-involved players" (Vanier 2009). Territories therefore also include governance structures and processes. Spatial planning can contribute towards equitable rural and structural transformation by providing policy-makers with information to help them identify and prioritise necessary sectoral interventions. In other words, spatial planning is an instrument that plays a significant role in identifying complementary and sequenced development priorities in full recognition of cross-sectoral synergies within the rural-urban, or the 'rurban', continuum.

Integrated spatial planning therefore forms a basis for sustainable investment- and economic decision-making by holistically looking at economic aspects (agriculture, mining, industries, commerce etc.), social aspects (urban as well as rural settlements, equity of distribution etc.) as well as environmental aspects (natural resource management, disaster prevention and mitigation, forest, climate change etc.).

Therefore, spatial planning- by taking into account different land uses, activities and interests plays an important role in creating new or maintaining existing social and economic opportunities outside the larger urban peripheries, such as smaller villages or cities. These priorities can then be anchored into policies and include improving access to primary product markets and manufactured goods and services beyond other neighbouring rural villages, providing social services such as education and health beyond the primary levels, enhancing access to financial services and credit, and the diversification of employment opportunities (Berdegúe, Proctor and Cazzuffi 2016).

Although the role of governance is crucial for attaining inter-sector and inter-municipal solutions, it remains challenging for governments to address such issues because policies are traditionally specialized by sectors and municipal power is limited by jurisdiction (Jain and Pallagst 2015).

The **New Urban Agenda** promotes balanced territorial development through national and regional spatial planning, with clearly established responsibilities for different spheres of authority. This implies the integration of urban and rural functions into national and sub-national spatial frameworks, fostering coherence between sectoral policies, promoting sustainable management and use of natural resources and land and promoting equitable regional development across the urban-rural continuum (UN-HABITAT III 2016).

From theory to practice: The GIZ Land Use Planning and Management Project in India

Setting the Scene

India has over 17 per cent of world's population living on 2.6 per cent of the world's geographical area. In many regions and states in India, the level of urbanization is continuously and dramatically increasing. The Indian Census 2011 reported 833 million people living in 640,000 villages and communities and 377 million people are living in 8,000 cities, with an overall urbanization rate of about 30 per cent. Tremendous pressure has been put on land as a result of the increasing population growth and rapid urbanisation.

A high percentage of urban growth is in the form of disconnected agglomerations around the city centres. Although these agglomerations have urban characteristics, they are not classified as urban areas and thus lack institutional structures and capacities to address, amongst others, infrastructure planning and service provision. As a result, high-rise buildings and high-density residential complexes can be found in rural areas- often without having planned for basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, freshwater or sewage. It becomes increasingly difficult to determine where cities end and where rural areas or the village start.

The urban sprawl causes disjointed areas of human settlements that are often disconnected from important public infrastructures (e.g. schools, sewage, water supply, waste management, power supply etc.). These Peri-Urban Areas are often unplanned as the growth happens outside the planned boundaries of the cities (see Fig. 2).

The quality of life in these areas is similar to those in small and medium towns of India, but are devoid of planning regulations and lack the level of service delivery attended by urban local bodies and authorities in statutory towns. Peri-urban villages, rural areas or census towns are governed by rural local bodies, which lack funds and capacities to cater to urban service delivery standards and planning regulations. Therefore, development is haphazard, unregulated and exceeds the carrying capacity of land. Many see development in India as being concentrated in certain large cities whereby the rural hinterlands remain deprived of growth. This ultimately results in spatial disparities across the country (Jain 2015).

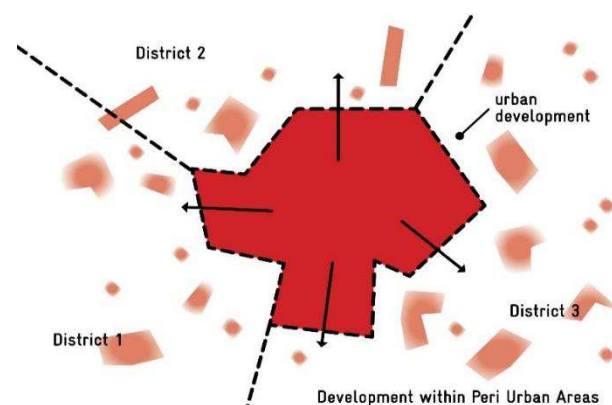


Figure 2: Disjointed urban sprawl

These disparities in terms of economic growth are heightened when looking at recent statistics on available agricultural land in India. Over the last few decades, the land use patterns in India have undergone major changes- especially the diversion of fertile land from its agricultural purpose for large industries and housing complexes, which has made it lucrative for speculators. This poses serious challenges for food security, particularly for the vulnerable sections of society. It also threatens the flora and fauna surviving in limited biodiversity hotspots. Furthermore, the per capita availability of agricultural land has declined from 0.5 hectares in 1951 to 0.15 hectares in 2011. According to the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), there has been an 11 percent increase in the area of land under non-agricultural uses. Furthermore, the report on State of Indian Agriculture 2015-16 indicates that the marginal (less than one hectare) and small (one to two hectares) size of land holdings

account for almost 85 percent of total operational land holdings (Government of India 2016). Marginal holdings are too small to provide the farm household with sufficient returns and incomes, which correlates with the World Bank (2012) estimates that 70 percent of the Indian poor (approx. 770 million people) are from the rural area.

“There is a need for an integrated spatial and territorial planning that keeps the urban and rural areas at the regional level in focus. India's urban-rural regions are shaped by extreme disparities in development and are deprived of adequate basic services and housing. This underlines the need for a strong urban economy that supports the regional balance of the city and the country. Such a paradigm shift requires a systematic and consistent planning approach on all scales” (LUPM 2017).

Current spatial planning in India

In India, planning generally takes the form of economic planning. There is a lack of spatial planning at the top tiers of the planning system because spatial planning starts at the regional or city level. Planning in India is furthermore limited to recommendations that lack enforcement. For instance, Indian planning is the responsibility of the central and state governments. It is free from any binding force of legal enactment. Planning is steered by guidelines issued by the Town and Country Planning Office (TCPO) at the national level. The regional and master plans are prepared by the Town and Country Planning (TCP) department at the state level, which include land use and transportation aspects and are also not mandatory (Jain and Pallagst 2015). The Census of India divides the nation into states, states into districts, districts into tehsils, which consist of towns (wards) and villages.

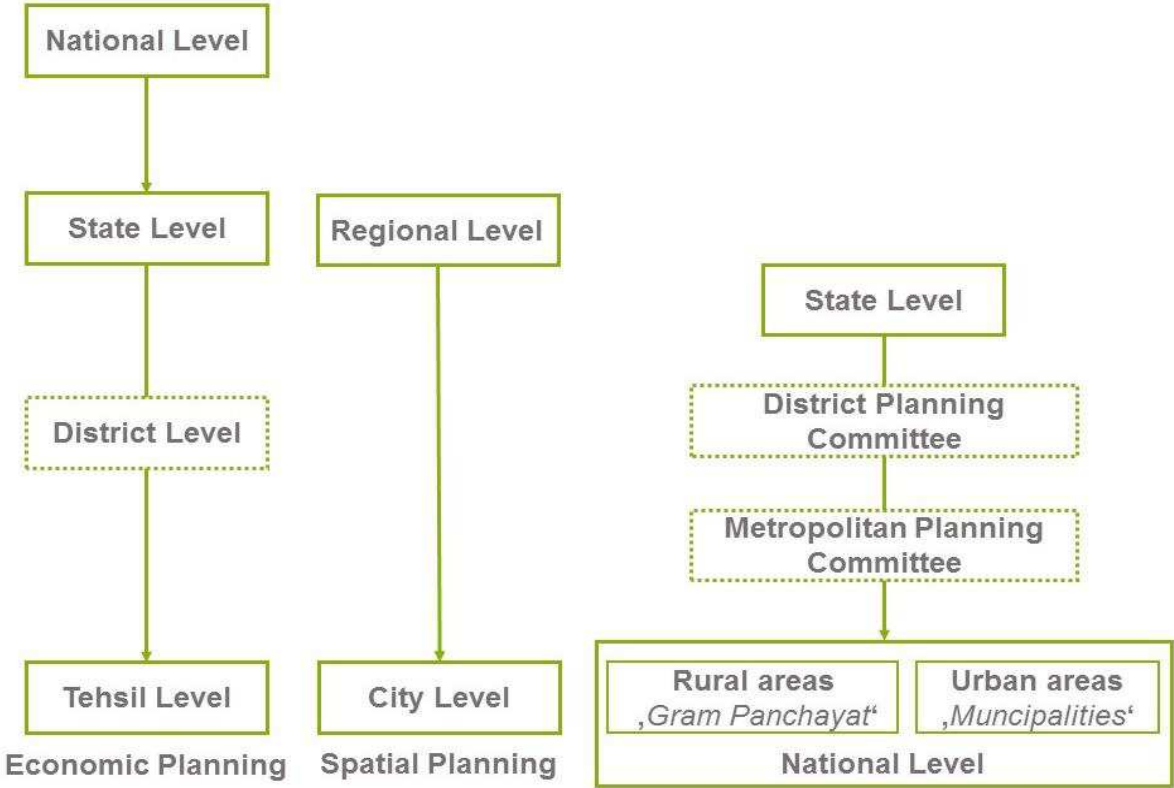


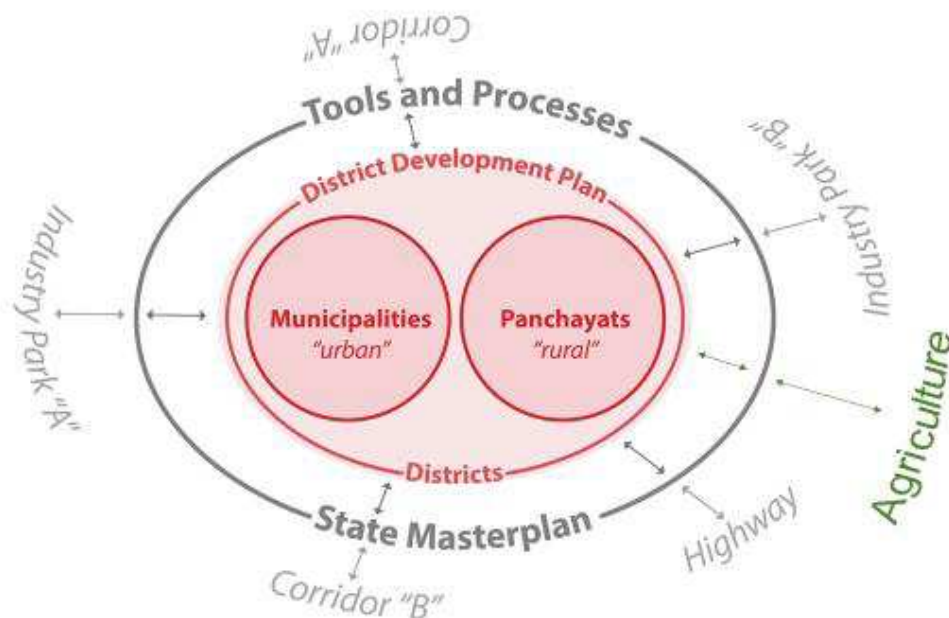
Figure 3: Spatial and economic planning, and local governance structure in India (Jain and Pallagst 2015)

India’s constitution defines two self-governing bodies at the local level: the Gram Panchayat for rural areas and municipalities for urban areas. The role of the former is economic development and social justice, whereas the latter is responsible for urban and town planning,

regulating land use, and providing civic infrastructure and economic and social development planning. The weak empowerment of Gram Panchayats to control development transfers the growth pressure from the city centre to peripheral rural areas, which is particularly advantageous because of the lack of development control and low land prices in these areas. Thus, in a fragmented government model, key local functions are delivered by different levels of government and have a large number of autonomous bodies, which often results in poor coordination among the various government levels (Jain and Pallagst 2015, see Fig. 3).

Roughly, a quarter of the 8000 Indian cities have an urban masterplan. However, most of the rural areas in India do not benefit from a consistent spatial planning, which is the responsibility of the state governments, and affects roughly 70 per cent of the Indian population. Planning authorities are limited to urban areas, neglecting the current challenges of unauthorised development at the periphery. A common response to the expanding urban boundaries is the creation of new entities, such as the Metropolitan Development Authorities (e.g. the Mumbai Metropolitan Region or Chennai Metropolitan Region). In addition, bigger scale visionary planning of corridors, transit axis or big industrial regions across the country are being planned for at national level. The biggest gaps in spatial planning in India therefore exist in those areas that are not covered by either Master Plans or special plans at national level. In the area of land utilisation, there is no single approach currently being followed across states. Various sectors such as industry, transport, mining, agriculture, electricity, water, education, health, etc. follow their own approaches and guidelines and differ between rural and urban areas.

The Indian Rurban Mission has strong political will and has renewed attention on the importance of rural economic development. However it does not sufficiently solve spatial inequalities: The absence of an integrated, overall concept for spatial and land use planning at both the state and national levels aggravates conflicts and encourages exploitation of land resources, ultimately leading to the spatial disparities. Spatial planning in this context would

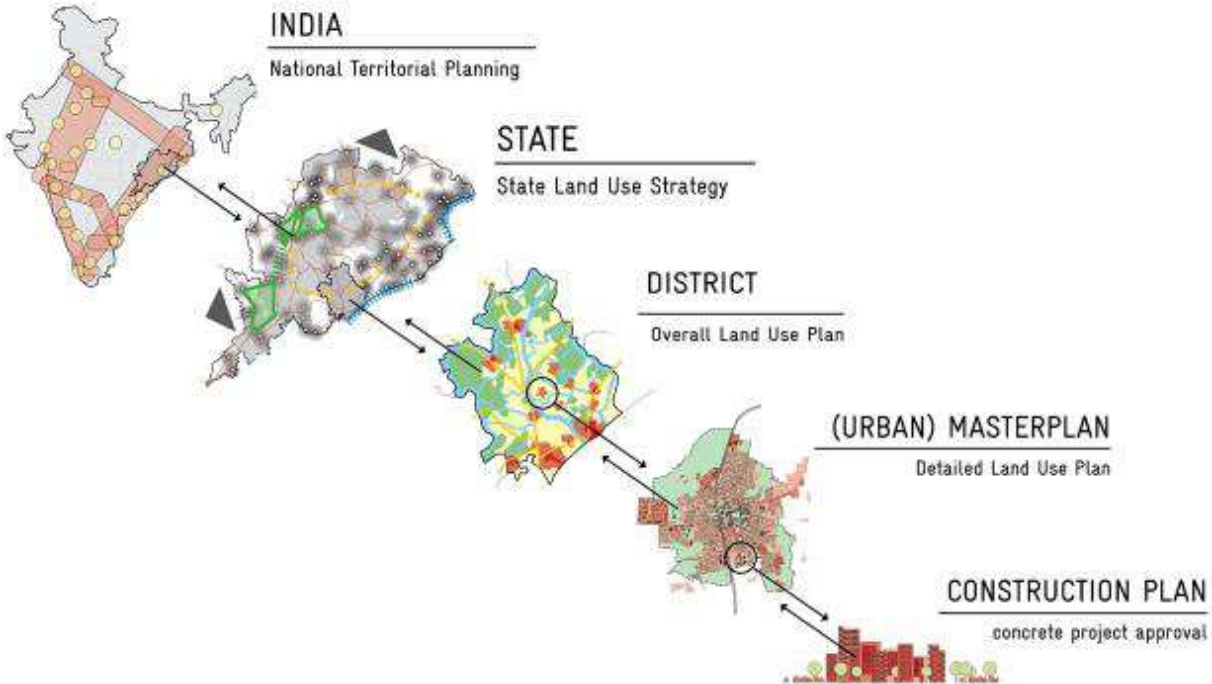


contribute significantly towards reducing the spatial inequalities, as it provides a basis on which economic planning and investment decision-making can be done. Against this backdrop, it is important to develop policies and institutional mechanisms promoting coherent land use planning and management.

Figure 4: District Plans: Linking rural and urban areas

An integrated planning approach is thus urgently needed to ensure that the currently mostly unplanned rural areas are also incorporated in spatial planning. The 74th amendment of the Indian Constitution provides a constitutional mandate to generate spatial planning in each district. However, spatial planning and development still take place haphazardly. Presently, most of the 640 Districts in India only focus on District budget planning. Enriching this with cross-sectoral maps and a spatial strategy would be an important step towards closing the rural-urban divide in planning. The Prime Minister has recently requested its 640 District Collectors across India to elaborate and deliver visionary ideas for the District Level. Planning at the District Level would be an important step in ensuring territorial development, taking into account rural-urban interlinkages and the multiplicity of functions of different sectors and the needs of different population groups (see Fig. 4). Ultimately, planning in India should be coherently done at all spatial levels (see Fig. 5).

This will also create a significant need for capacity development measures about spatial planning. The Town and Country Planning Organisation of the Government of India estimates that “85.000 - 90.000 additional planners would be required in the country at various levels of planning framework, which roughly works out to 1 Planner per 14,000 population” (URDPFI 2015).



The Land Use Planning and Management Project of GIZ

Under the Indo-German Corporation, the Ministry of Rural Development with its Department

Figure 5: Integrated spatial planning at all levels

of Land Resources and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) are jointly implementing the Land Use Planning and Management Project in India since 2016. The project focuses on spatial planning at the regional scale and at the District level. The objective of the project is to improve the system of land use planning in India in order to enable

and ensure that Indian state planning institutions apply policies and instruments of integrated spatial and land use planning.

The project will develop standard operating procedures and guidelines for collaboration and interface with different departments within the state for spatial planning. This will also promote inter-sectoral coordination mechanism among various departments at state level, which is an essential prerequisite for integrated land use planning and management.

In coordination with the Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), the project has identified Odisha and Tamil Nadu as two pilot states. Therefore, the project works at different scales of the centre, the states, the districts and the municipal levels (see Fig. 6). In Odisha, the implementing partner is the Revenue and Disaster Management Department and the Housing and Urban Development Department and in Tamil Nadu the project is being implemented with the Planning and Special Initiatives.

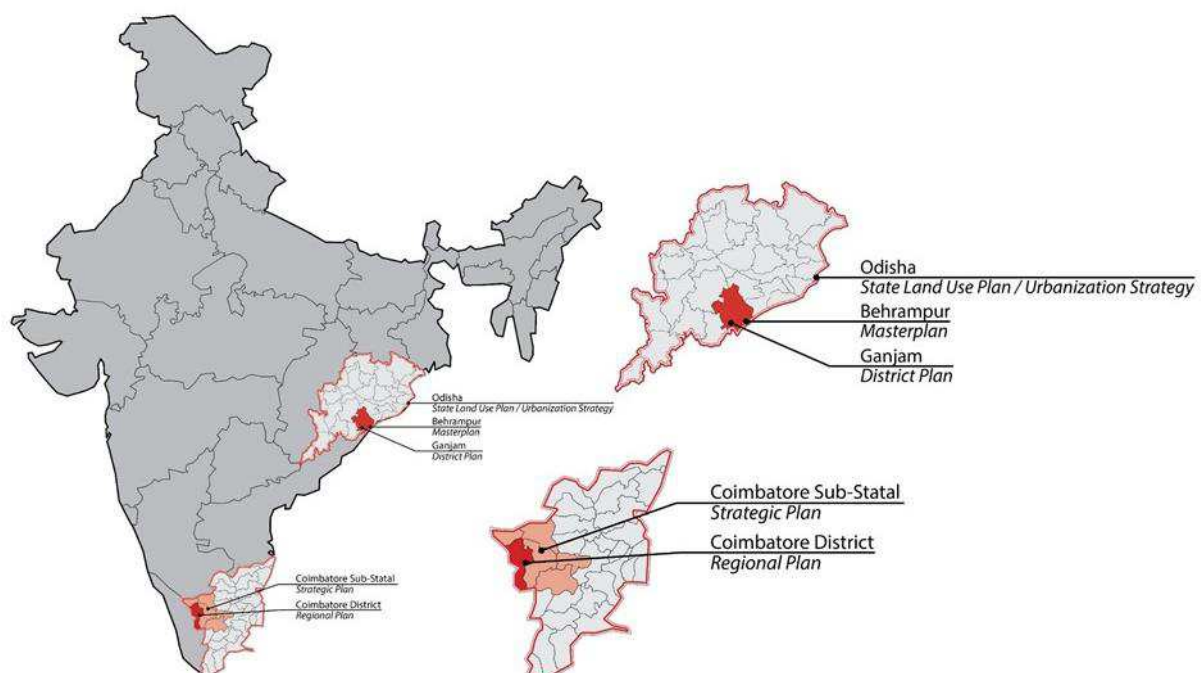


Figure 6: Pilot areas of the GIZ project in Odisha and Tamil Nadu

The Land Use Planning and Management project facilitates interaction and cooperation between the various planning levels and institutions. The project, therefore, works at the central, state, and municipal level to carry out the following **activities**:

- Finalisation of two District Plans in Tamil Nadu and Odisha by the end of 2018.
- Development of principles and guidelines of land use policies, technical and methodological planning instruments as well as capacity building programmes for land use planning. These policies and guidelines are derived through extensive discussions with the main sectoral ministries and bodies, both, at the policy and the technical levels and the technical levels
- Engaging the central and state departments, the local administrations, private sector, academia, and the local population to develop standard planning tools and processes for territorial strategic development.

- Bringing together, at state level, cross-sectoral planning institutions with relevant sector authorities to concretise the goals of integrated spatial and land use planning (see Fig. 7).
- Building specific competencies to apply the developed policies, guidelines, tools, and processes adequately. The project offers human capacity development measures for technical specialists and managers of cross-sectoral and sector planning institutions at state and municipal level.

The project aims at achieving the following **overall impacts**:

- The development of the District Plans will promote decentralisation of planning processes, and enable better decision-making by District Planning Committees.
- Through the introduction and application of modern planning tools and guidelines, land management and land use planning will become more transparent and balanced, with

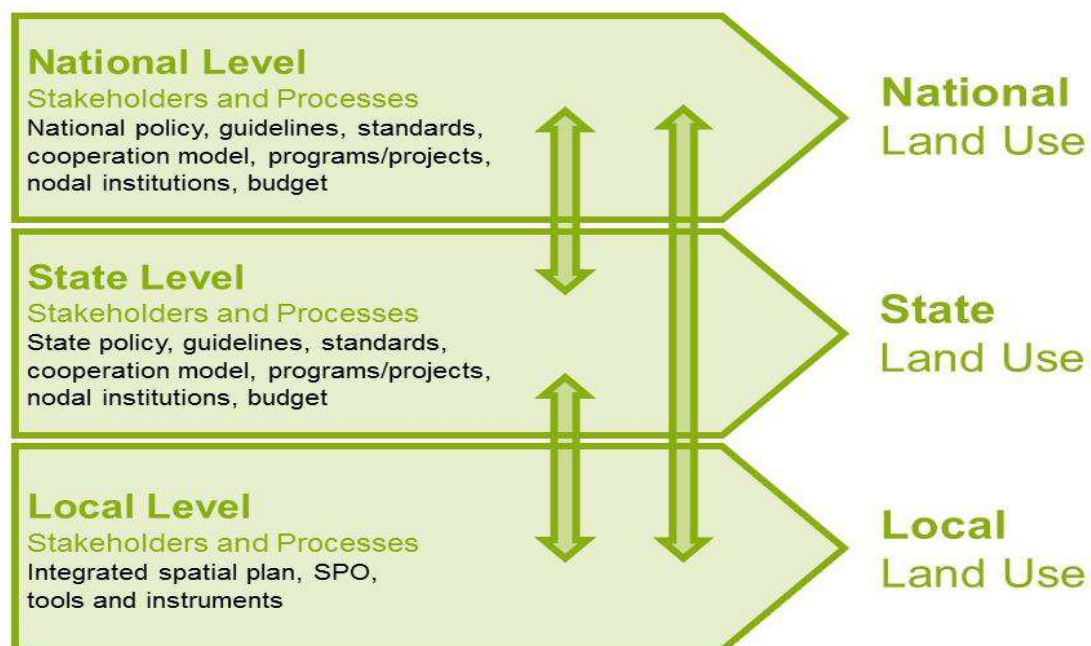


Figure 7: Horizontal and vertical planning

regard to the ecological, economic, and social aspects. This includes enhanced recognition of the role spatial planning plays for economic planning, which can especially support equitable and sustainable growth in currently unplanned areas- such as peri-urban and rural areas.

- Operating procedures and guidelines for intra- and inter-ministerial coordination will be standardised. This will facilitate inter-sectoral cooperation among various ministries and agencies at the central, state, and municipal level, which is an essential pre-requisite for developing an integrated land use plan. Therefore, rural-urban linkages are strengthened by bringing together various actors and sectors.
- The project aims to create a culture of spatial planning by demonstrating the idea of a normative approach of land use planning and management.

Key lessons learned

Since the project started in March 2016, several lessons have already been learned at various levels, which contribute towards bridging the gap between the rural-urban continuum.

- Planning should be State-specific but harmonized:
 - There are 29 States in India, all of which are culturally, economically and environmentally diverse. Furthermore, land use planning is mandated to the State level. Therefore, it is difficult to introduce a National Land Use Plan and nationally determined norms and zoning ordinances.
 - Most States use different terminology to describe planning procedures and have a different understanding of what constitute 'development plans', 'economic plans' and 'regional plans'.
 - There are different boundaries- geographic and political
- Linking spatial planning with development (economic) planning:
 - Gathering data and creating maps is not planning. Spatial planning should be part of governance processes and closely linked to development plans that take into account the economic, social and environmental trajectory of specific areas.
 - It is important to link district plans to regional and State development plans to ensure that rural areas are adequately planned for and to create benefits from rural-urban interlinkages.
- Spatial planning can be a leverage for change:
 - Spatial planning is an instrument for planning and can be used for holistic territorial development, but needs to be embedded within policy-making processes.
 - Spatial planning and land management cannot be separated, especially not when there are complex governance structures and many stakeholders. Land management can ensure the convergence of "bottom-up" and "top-down" planning through the enforcement of the plans.
- Importance of multi-stakeholder forums:
 - Spatial planning requires taking into account all sectors and cooperating with many different stakeholders.
 - Setting-up such mechanisms takes considerable time and a strong and committed steering structure.
- It takes time to raise awareness on the importance of planning at different levels (not just urban/master plans).
- Introducing new levels of spatial planning requires long-term capacity development and significant resources (technical and financial).

Conclusion

For public policies to be effective in improving the economic, social and structural realities of urban and rural areas, they must address the entire region and work to strengthen the ties between urban and rural areas- as the rural concept highlights. Governments at the national and local level must recognize the growing importance of the urban-rural linkage and craft policies that make adequate investments in infrastructure, including transportation, to improve rural productivity while allowing access to markets, jobs and public service by both men and women (Mylott 2009).

In general, spatial planning is a tool that helps to make decisions that are more transparent and equitable. Spatial Planning is a process of shaping the built and natural environment around us. It is about the management and development of space in order to create better places, responding to the needs of society, the economy and the environment. Spatial planning can contribute towards equitable rural and structural transformation by providing policy-makers with information to help them identify and prioritise necessary sectoral interventions.

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