**Why Cities are Important?**

● The substantial contribution of urban areas to India's GDP, expected to reach 75% by 2030, underscoring the critical role of cities in driving economic growth and development (NITI Aayog, 2018).

● Disturbingly low numbers pertaining to the presence of master plans in urban settlements, with only 2216 urban settlements equipped with master plans and a mere 627 settlements possessing updated ( in the last 20 years) master plans, highlighting the deficiencies in urban planning and governance (TCPO, 2021).

● Moreover, India's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction by 2030 emphasizes the imperative of addressing the pressing urban challenges to foster sustainable and resilient urban landscapes.

**Keys to Uncovering the Urban Planning Challenge**

A.The Legislation and Urban Governance ​, Majorly outdated acts on which decisions taken till date. ​​9 out of 35 Capital Cities have Sectoral Plans supporting Master Plan

B. The Institutional Capacity

Ratio of urban planners ranges from 1:5,00,000 to 1:10,00,000 against a recommended ratio of 1:30,000 to 1:50,000 (Generalised)

Urban Planning and Services need extremely adaptive local governance and administrators.

Urban capacity situation is abysmal in hill areas like Uttarakhand, NorthEast, coastal, forest and Island areas

Due to non-availability of urban planning capacities and capabilities, States and Cities are unable to leverage the opportunities linked to urbanization.

C. The Local Governance Problem

Failure in Implementation of 74th CAA- No structured administration/ definition of power in terms of planning and decision making.

Mayors/ Comissioners Legally have no say over the MP, just consultants - will work with big cities , not for 4000 odd towns.

**What is Urban? is the definition now Valid for the current Indian Context?**

Fundamental Source of Confusion, What is Urban, what should we plan for, Metropolitan Cities (Million Plus) -53, Stauatory towns - 4,041 or Census Towns - 3,784. Is it just a population play?

Do we have enough resources, Planners-Administators - analysts to monitor and control the growth

Do we have resources/ tools to deploy master plans at scale?

Can Master Plans , when done can acually harbinger sustsinable development? Can they lead to sustainabile, resilient, equitable, adaptive future?

Summarising this,

Very few cities have plans and many of them are expired. Very few even get used.

Hardly 30% of Indias "Urban" Settlements have Plans, and Incedental Governance

Even if they have plans, They are restricted to Landuse, which is not ideal.

India has a serious Capacity Issue in both in Planning, Governance and Implemenrtation

What India Desperately needs, is its towns to have a Master Plans tha, which can actually be a Statuatory, Data Driven Decision Making Framework that unifies all the departmental themes

**What is a Master Plan? and What Does a Planner Do?**

A Master Plan, serving as a statutory document, constitutes a fundamental tool in delineating the spatial framework of a city and guiding its development and land management over a defined period. In India, the concept of a Master Plan, typically formulated for a duration of 20 years, plays a pivotal role in orchestrating coherent and sustainable urban growth. The planning hierarchy in India encompasses various levels, including perspective plans, regional plans, master plans, and local area plans, each catering to specific aspects of urban development and governance. The development and implementation of a comprehensive master plan form the cornerstone of a strategic approach towards fostering holistic and sustainable urban development.

So Esentially, it is just a Policy, with a spatial implication, and this is not just a city or a master plan that has a similar setup. Can a Plan Just exist for a city?

What makes a master plan different - is that it is Statuatory in Nature, it has always evolved as this tool that governs or guides a citys growth , on which services , infrastructure, societies, economies and not to forget, ecosystems are built. It is a document with colours that pertain to specific set of rules on what to do, and what not to do spatially, and translates that to each land parcel through Land Use Regulations and Development Control Regulations, or commonly referred to as Building Bye Laws

Ideally,

* The master plan consists of future directions of development, policy and implantation of the same.
* It sets out how a particular area can develop and redevelop into the future.
* A high-level plan intended to set out objectives and strategies to manage development and change over time.
* A process that defines what is important about a place and how its character and quality can be conserved, improved and enhanced.

**Who administers this Land Use?**

Zooming out of Urban Level, THere are many actors that can still can directly/ indirectly control, administer/ steward land use . An example of this, hierarchically over over 3 tier governance system is shown below

Indian Cities and their "Organic" Growth - How cities currently are expanding, adapting and improving?

Apart than the Obvious Migration and Economic and Employment growth,

The Process of urban development in India is rather chaotic, unorganized coming from the colonial roots driven by by several key factors broadly arranged as

**Overarching Political Vision**: The formulation of a comprehensive vision by governmental entities at the central or state level is instrumental in steering the growth trajectory of cities. Leveraging existing drivers of growth, such as capital and fiscal resources, governmental bodies conceptualize and catalyze the development of urban centers.

**The Not So Planned Interventions**: Infrastructure development serves as the bedrock of urban progress, with tailored interventions designed to address the specific needs and contexts of local communities. Large-scale projects, such as Metro Rails, Outer Ring Roads (ORRs), and Transit Hubs, emerge as pivotal drivers of growth, aiming to mitigate the infrastructural deficits prevalent in urban areas.

Large Scale Policy and Resource Deployment: Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, AMRUT, JNNURM, and UIDSSMT, although aimed at bolstering service delivery and enhancing capacities, often fall short in integrating a comprehensive regional perspective. The lack of holistic planning and implementation strategies undermines the efficacy of these interventions, hindering their potential impact on urban development.

**"Planned Development":** In contrast to greenfield cities such as Chandigarh, Gandhinagar, and Naya Raipur, where the implementation of a Master Plan has guided urban growth, the majority of Indian cities lack a comprehensive framework for planned development. The absence of robust master planning exacerbates the challenges associated with uncontrolled urbanization and hampers sustainable growth

**Whats Broken?**

A. Systemic Problems

Long-term focus neglects short-term actions, reducing effectiveness in a rapidly changing environment.

Master Plan is treated as a static end product, lacking adaptability as a continuous process.

Little to no Public / Citizen Involvement

B. Capacity Problems

Lengthy preparation and approval times lead to outdated documents and frequent changes in land use.

Lack of symbiosis between socio-economic dynamism and the physical determination of a city.

Absence of integration between physical and fiscal planning efforts.

C. Implementation Problems

High and difficult-to-achieve norms and standards for land use and facilities provision.

Ineffective public participation in the planning process.

Irregular and ineffective monitoring and review mechanisms.

Emphasis on control rather than promotion of development.

Inefficiency in development management, insufficient catering to the demands of the informal sector, and occasional political interference resulting in irrational proposals and implementation decisions.

**Problem Statement**

Cities are Not well planned due to Lack of Capacity to Create a Master Plan. In case city has a Master Plan, it is Very One Dimensional In Nature, not data driven often leading top its negligence.

The gateway for a Citizen to Access / comply with cities development is with Building and Services. These services and permissions ideally are to be derivatives from the masterplan, initiating a feedback loop , that currently lac

**What Can we Address - Where Can AI Plugin**

Capacity - AI, Systemically integrated within departmental silos, can effectively do 70% of a Plans Work. - Ideal, Organized Data flows and interactive dashbopard for Citizens and Desicion makers alike

Incase an MP Doesnt exist, a one stop solutiion for compilation and data synergy for a Masterplan/ Dashboard

Implementation - A Citizen first approach, co piloted, Stewarded by AI, will essentially be the core to urban service delivery and Implementation - AI assisted Process optimization's for

Building Permissions- triggering data flow

Compliance - Sustainability : Integrating the BPMS with Leed/ GRIHA / BEE Rating Any accounrting standard of choice, pushing to sustainability

**Tentative Hypothesis**

You Plan for the One Citizen with Data, The City Plans for Itself

The integration of building plans and citizen scale services into a data-driven system, enhanced by technologies such as IOT, Generative AI backed with mobile crowdsourcing platforms, will significantly improve urban planning in India. This improvement will manifest in enhanced decision-making, increased efficiency in infrastructure management, and improved interoperability between various devices and platforms