

# DEVELOPMENT OF INTERMEDIATE-SIZE TOWNS: AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF URBANIZATION

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## ABSTRACT

*The concept of intermediate-size towns emerged in France with the policies of decentralization. After the failure of the urbanization-policies in 1950s and 60s, the French in the beginning of the 70s, encouraged a developmental policy of regional and provisional re-adjustment, through the development of the middle sized towns. This subject is becoming important, resulting from national decentralization policies. As very little work has been done on this subject in Asia, so it seems that it is less important in the case of Asia.*

*In Pakistan, due to lack of basic infrastructure, many of these towns have an economic base broader than just servicing agriculture, which includes commerce, services, and small-scale industrial sector involving agriculture-related activities. But still these townships are inadequate in performing the required role of rural development and enhancing the quality of life, which is mainly due to the lack of implementation of integrated explicit policies.*

## INTRODUCTION

Every person has a basic right for a suitable living environment. The realization of a suitable living environment requires access to basic needs and services, such as health, education, fresh air, clean water, neighbourhood facilities and other convenient services. These may be achieved through planning of the new settlements and streamlining the existing settlements.

The general pattern of growth and development of human settlements, both urban and rural, is uncontrolled and is haphazard. Majority of the urban settlements contains sub-standard areas all over, with the exception of small pockets of planned development. There is a rapid growth in population and physical size, due to the migration of a large number of people to the cities, so urban areas are becoming congested. This rapid growth of population and urbanization, coupled with the poor availability of urban services such as, water supply, sewerage, garbage and solid-waste

collection and disposal system, is largely responsible for the poor living-environment. Therefore, there is a need to organize the efforts and resources to provide safe and comfortable living-environment, with proper basic services and utilities (such as drinking water, sanitation facilities, education, health and urban services) so that a healthy living environment may be provided to our human settlements. Intermediate towns can also offer better facilities in social services i.e., health and education, than large and small cities. They become stopping-off points for migrants who might otherwise go directly to the big cities, but the big cities have no more carrying capacity to accommodate more population.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research paper attempts to find out the existing status/conditions of intermediate towns. Why intermediate-towns development is important for sustainable rural development? What has been done? What has to be done? However, the specific objectives of this research are as under:

- i. To review programs /policies related to intermediate towns;
- ii. To highlight the functional role of intermediate towns;
- iii. To elucidate the correlation between socio-economic performance of these towns for sustainable rural development.

## CLASSIFICATION OF INTERMEDIATE TOWNS

F.K. Khan and Ahmed Iftikhar (1991) have classified all towns of 25,000 to 99,999 inhabitants as intermediate cities, even if they have no intermediate role in the urban structure of the country.

Dr. Rronahil (1987) has defined the cities with population between 25,000 and 100,000 as intermediate cities.

In some countries, like People's Republic of China (UNCRD, 1982), National Human Settlement Policy classifies the urban centre according to the population-

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size into the following four classes:

i) large cities	500,000 and above
ii) small cities	100,000 - 499,999
iii) intermediate towns	25,000 - 99,999
iv) small towns	10,000 - 24,999

In model No. 1 (Attached at Annexure "A") Postal, J. B., discusses the Intermediate Town with special reference to existing urban planning. The model further describes the existing housing-supply, land absorption, land supply and demand i.e., forecast of population of households to be accommodated. The population of household growth is based on concept of measuring locational factors. The present model also attempts to describe the following important aspects regarding Intermediate Towns, which are:

1. Establish usable land-supply by zone
2. Partition land-supplies into potential single-family and multifamily land.
3. Partition into three values classes.
4. Apply land-absorption rate to vacant land, to estimate holding-capacity in dwellings.

The model has requisite role for all kind of development or for the establishment of Intermediate Towns.

In model no. 2 (Attached at Annexure "B") Thrown, N. J. W. presents future framework of policy for intermediate town at various levels, i.e., starting from national up to local level. The same model discusses the following three important aspects for the development of Intermediate Towns, which are categorized as:

1. Economic conditions
2. Central Government Policy.
3. Local Urban System.

In this model, an attempt has been made to present the importance and functions of Intermediate Towns. Different level strategies are necessary for system-designing, which include local urban economy, local government system and residential structure. All these factors lead towards housing-policy output. The housing policy further addresses the new building, housing management improvement and area-policy. All these factors are merged with the development of Intermediate Towns. Moreover, this model clearly

indicates that the Intermediate Towns release the pressure on urban areas, because with the development of these towns, socio-economic activities are generated in rural hinterland.

## REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In Pakistan, there is no direct policy that specifically addresses the issues related to the intermediate towns of the country. But there are other policies, both integrated and sectoral, which address the issues related to the human settlements, such as, National Settlement Policy (NSP), Management of Cities Policies, Settlement Planning, Shelter, Site and Services including Housing Policies, National Conservation Strategy (NCS) and Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy. All these policies mainly concentrate on the big cities of the country. Some specific policies for the development of intermediate-size towns with indirect policies and sectoral development programmes, such as, farm to market roads and highways in Punjab Province of Pakistan, that has very strong effect on the development of intermediate towns. So also, area-development projects, particularly in Punjab province of Pakistan, i.e., Sargodha and Multan Areas Development Projects, Fruit and Vegetable Development Projects and other micro-enterprises development, particularly by AKRSP in Northern Areas and Chitral, Agricultural Development Bank, Small Industrial Development Board, Livestock, Horticulture and Tourism departments and small hydro-power generation projects.

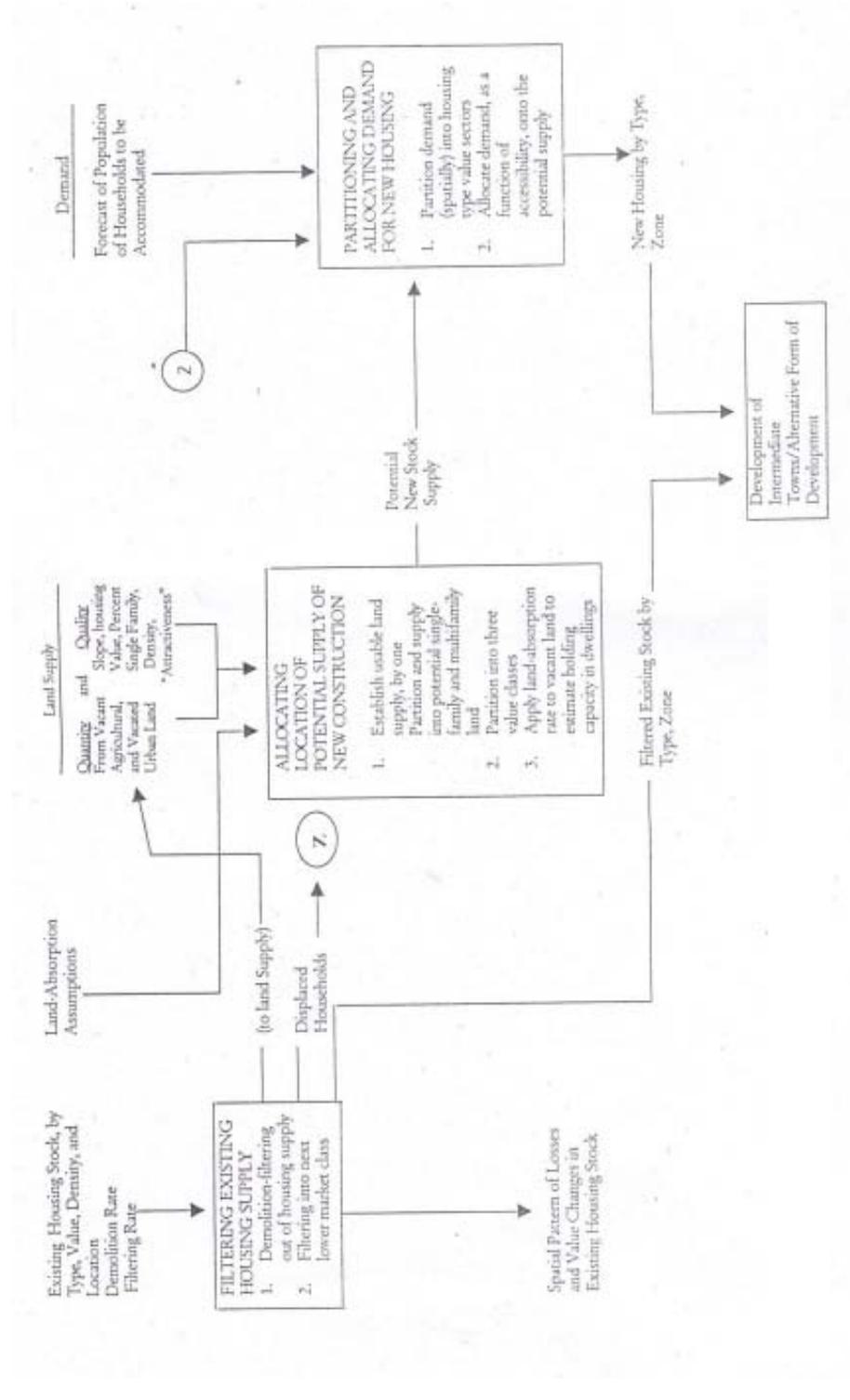
## HUMAN SETTLEMENT POLICY

Settlement policy is directed towards four distinct sets of issues:

- a) Settlement policy as an instrument affecting regional economic growth and interregional disparities. This, in turn, has had two areas of focus: an urban - industrial focus, where settlement is seen as an instrument for promoting industrial development, particularly in underdeveloped regions; and a rural focus, where settlement is used as an instrument for promoting and stimulating productivity in rural development;
- b) Settlement policy as a reaction to urban size. Again, there are two distinct areas of emphasis: a reaction to what is perceived to be the excessive

# Model No. 1

## Existing Urban Planning for the Development of Intermediate Town

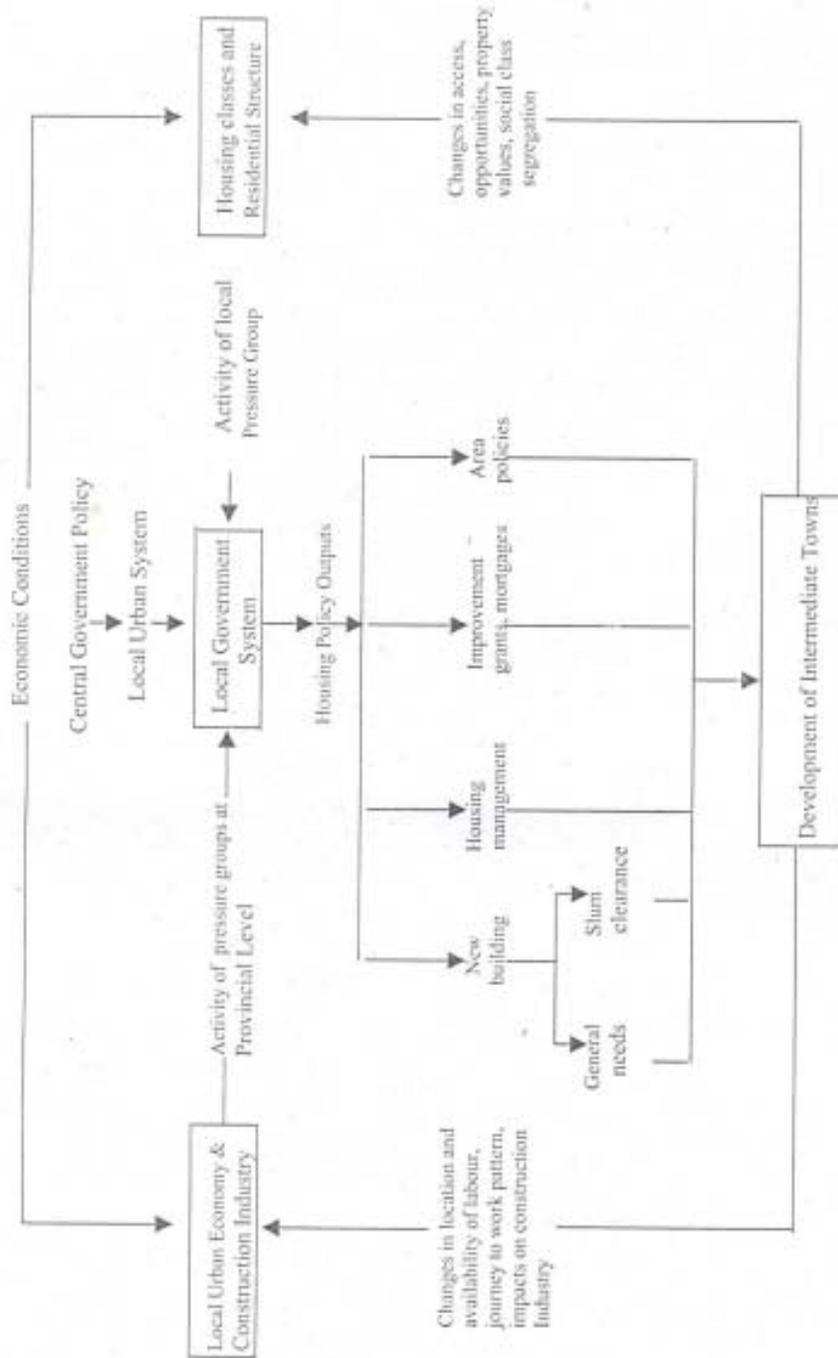


Source: Post, J.B., An Atlas of Fantasy (Souvenir Press, London 2001)

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**Model No. 2**

Recent Policy-Framework of Intermediate Town



Source: Thrower, N.J.W., Maps & Man, Prentice-Hall, 2002

- size of larger urban areas; and a reaction to the problem of declining towns or settlements, which are considered to be too small;
- c) Settlement policy as a mechanism affecting the level, form and distribution of social and utility services;
  - d) A fourth set of issues which has informed settlement-policy in many contexts is made up of what may be termed 'extraneous' factors - for example, defence, social control and so on. Clearly, the first three issues are distinct and different. Often, however, similar, and sometimes identical, settlement-policy packages have been applied to fundamentally different issues or combinations of issues.

Viewing with concern the regional imbalance in growth, leading to accelerating concentration of population in a few metropolitan centers, Government of Pakistan at Cabinet-level has set up a high-level committee to prepare a National Human Settlement Policy and Management of Cities Policy for Pakistan. The Ministry of Housing and Works, Environment and Urban Affairs Division carried out the policy-study in the 80s. This was the outcome of six years of work and deliberation on the urban future of Pakistan. The main objective of the NHSPS were:

- i) to determine the expected urbanized population by the year 2003, as a function of total population-growth and as a residual of labour-absorption capacity under various agrarian policies options;
- ii) to analyze the regional and sub-regional differential impact of various existing and recent macro-economic/sectoral policies, whether intended or implicit;
- iii) to analyze cost-effectiveness in urban production as a function of city-size in Pakistan, in order to determine the most suitable urban-size hierarchy, given the macro policies and priorities of the nation;
- iv) to suggest the geographical optimal distribution of population and economic activity under various scenarios;
- v) to suggest the framework of institutional co-ordination between federal, provincial and local-level government, in order to implement the approved National Human Settlement Patterns.

It is crucial for the developing countries, where rate of urban growth is very high and that too is taking place

in the form of urban sprawl, to formulate policies for streamlining the growth of the world which has formulated a NHSPS in 80s as a means to co-ordinate the distribution of population, socio-economic activities and to rationalize the urbanization policies over the country (GOP - NHSPS, 1980; GOP, 1996). In the policy, five major urbanization scenarios have been generated ranging from centralized growth in the metropolitan areas to dispersal to small and intermediate towns; these model-scenarios are briefly explained as follows:

- i) No-change Model: Which assumes that the historical growth-rates of individual human settlements are the determinants of their future growth. This model does not take into account the impact of governmental policies.
- ii) Centralization Model: Which states that future growth of human settlements are a direct function of their existing size, i.e. the larger the settlement, the faster it will grow in absolute, as well as percentage terms.
- iii) Decentralization Model: This model assumes that small and intermediate towns can be encouraged to grow rapidly, to take in the largest possible share of the forthcoming massive urbanization. Government is also serious in controlling the growth of big cities.
- iv) Efficiency Model: This model reflects the real economic opportunity and aims to maximize future national economic growth, by diverting a high percentage of the forthcoming massive urbanization into most efficient places. The efficiency is measured as productivity per urban resident, which is a function of infrastructure-investment per urban resident.
- v) Least Cost Model: This assumes that allocating the maximum feasible share of urbanization to low-cost cities can minimize public and private-sector investment.

Study of economic productivity has allowed generation of GDP maximization scenarios, which concentrate investment along the major transport corridors. Outputs include sophisticated investment resource-pool projections, based in two alternative econometric models. Major inputs have gone into production of costs of urbanization, including the cost of creating jobs in all major sectors of economy in all the big significant settlements of the country. Similarly, shelter

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and urban infrastructure costs have been calculated for all the significant settlements as functions of standards, physical conditions and economic distance. These elements have been put together to determine the possibilities for a guided urbanization process that meets a number of benefit objectives, such as inter-regional and inter-personal equity, GDP maximization, balance-of-payment improvement and maximizing job-creation. The study concludes that the net result of investment-policies and pricing-policies has been to favour the urban sector at the expense of the rural sector. Within the urban sector, the net balance of governmental policies has been to favour the big cities, including Islamabad and four provincial capitals, at the expense of intermediate and smaller towns. Similarly, within agriculture, the over-riding national objectives of attaining self-sufficiency in wheat and exportable surplus of rice and cotton result in definite bias in favour of irrigated areas as opposed to barani area, which include the mountainous areas. Finally, policy-recommendations ranging from micro-economic and sectoral aspects to explicit location-strategies, have been prepared for different action-levels.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of intermediate towns, particularly with their location characteristics, growth and function, is very important for rural development. The study of why and how these service functions concentrate together in certain location is called Central Place Theory, and Christaller referred to the rural settlement that developed from this tendency as "central place". This study concentrate only on the central places with size between 25,000 to 99,999. The large or small cities or small towns are not included in the scope of this research. The small and intermediate towns perform lesser function, are more in number and relatively located near to each other, while the large towns and big cities perform more functions, are few and located apart from each other.

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF INTERMEDIATE TOWNS: INTERMEDIATE TOWNS AS CENTRAL PLACES

Size of urban settlement is fundamental to the pattern of urban systems and their development-functions in a region. In a study of southeastern Nigeria, Okafor argues "that there is some evidence to suggest that the population of each town can serve as an index of

its importance, centrality and a regional development-role"(Okafre, 1985; P-148-149). According to Rodinell (1983) central place hierarchy, which often results in a rank-size distribution of cities, the intermediate towns provide particular locations to the specialized goods and services and make them available to the consumer throughout the fringe areas of the region. Rural people who live in or near these towns have access to lower-order development, as these towns can provide a de-concentrated, articulated and integrated system of cities with potential access to markets. People who live in or near these towns have access to markets. They have also access to lower-order goods and services in local market, as well as higher-order functions that have to be located in large cities in any part of the region, and it constitutes a "balanced" pattern of urbanization.

### INTERMEDIATE TOWNS AS SERVICE CENTERS

Intermediate towns perform social and economic functions that are important for regional development, functioning quite reasonably. Therefore the intermediate towns are important not merely because of their size, but because of the services they render to the rural areas. As services centers, these towns, can provide public, social, commercial and personal service not only to its own population but also to the surrounding rural hinterlands.

These towns have sufficiently large populations to offer economies of scale for a wide variety of health, education and welfare services. World Bank studies indicate that service-coverage is highly variable among intermediate cities. The poorest residential areas of Colombian intermediate cities have sufficient access to health, education, Water, Sewerage, or other urban services.

Economies of intermediate towns are usually dominated by basic consumption and personal services. Study of intermediate cities in developing countries points out that "as they grow, manufacturing and productive services, construction, transport, communications, financial repair and related activities are more important.

Apart from the "Formal" sector of services, the "informal" sector of the economy of the intermediate towns can play an important role, not only in

supporting a large number of people earning their income, but also a large amount of consumers who can get their daily needed things at cheaper rates at the most accessible locations

### **INTERMEDIATE TOWNS AS AGRO-PROCESSING CENTERS**

Relatively large populations allow intermediate towns in many third-world countries to stimulate agricultural production in their hinterlands. As the intermediate towns grow, it reflects more and more intensification of agricultural production in the hinterlands. The tendency for farmers is to switch from subsistence to cash-crop production, the introduction of new advanced agricultural methods and procedures, and the diversification of village economies to meet the demand for agricultural and artisanal goods within these towns. Studies of changes in agricultural production in rural areas around Meerut City, in India, indicate a steady increase in both production and income as rapid changes occurred in farming areas surrounding the city in the 1970s and 1980s. In many Third World countries, the intermediate towns have grown as the result of their agricultural processing and distribution functions.

The women who made "fura" often employed other women in the village to process and prepare it, and children and students to carry their goods to market. He observed that the effects of commercialization and modernization of the agricultural sector contributes to the industrial and commercial growth of these towns, providing more job opportunities of off-farm employment in the area and a market not only for more consumable goods, but as farm income increases, far more consumable goods are wanted by farm people.

### **INTERMEDIATE TOWNS: STIMULANT OF RURAL ECONOMIES**

Intermediate towns can promote more equitable economic growth in rural regions. In a study for the World Bank, Richardson argues that these benefits can include commercialization of agriculture, provision of better services to people in rural regions, national spatial integration, diffusion of social and technical innovations from the major metropolitan areas, and from abroad, the decentralization of job opportunities, and "most important of all, the more equitable

distribution of welfare, among urban areas and among regions resulting from an intermediate-city strategy". These towns act as cultural places and provide access to the services, facilities, and resources needed for rural development. They can provide better marketing-facilities for the agricultural products produced in the surrounding rural areas and create a more efficient way for agro-processing and agricultural-support industries in rural areas, which increase food production, and provide off-farm employment opportunities.

Developing a system of intermediate towns will spread the benefits of development as widely as possible throughout the country's economic sector and geographical area and the resulting effects will be a more balanced development. Moreover, strengthening of Intermediate towns and the linkages between them and cities can stimulate equitable bottom-up development.

### **INTERMEDIATE TOWNS AS CENTERS OF ATTRACTION FOR RURAL MIGRANTS**

The intermediate towns offer better facilities in health, education and social services than rural areas, so they become stopping-off points for migrants who might otherwise go directly to the largest metropolis. For many migrants, the stop-off becomes permanent in these towns. The duration of stay of all migrants may not be a permanent one and the period of stay may be shorter than in large metropolitan cities, but still these towns have the potential to attract and provide the first stopping-off point to rural migrants. Evidence from Brazil indicates that intermediate towns have been able to attract and retain substantial numbers of rural migrants. Census data forms (1980) suggest that about 67% rural and 68% urban male population who migrated to seven intermediate-towns are still living there from five years.

With the scale of their commercial and industrial sector, these towns offer opportunities for upward mobility and economic improvement for the very low-income population of surrounding rural villages. The mixture of both formal and informal employment structures in intermediate towns can offer far better jobs to the rural, unemployed off-farm workers. In Taegu, Korea, economic factors motivate people to move from rural areas. Over 50% of those migrants moved to Taiga to

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escape poverty in the countryside, to seek employment, or to take advantage of business-opportunities in the city.

Intermediate towns play an increasingly important role in the development-process of the developing countries. This is because of more emphasis on agriculture and rural development; growing awareness towards formulation of urbanization-policies and strategies; and planned dispersal of development-activities, particularly in countries that have attained reasonable high level of urbanization and industrialization.

### CONCLUSIONS

There is a strong positive correlation between the socio-economic performance of these intermediate-towns and the vitality of the rural hinterland where they are located. Such a correlation indicates that the level and growth-pattern of these towns within a given hierarchy determines the aggregate level of regional development. Inconsistencies in the pattern of growth of such towns may likewise create inconsistencies in the pattern of regional growth, in terms of inter-regional economic and social disparities.

As shelter is an integral part of settlement development, an important part of shelter-strategy will be the planning and management of urban and rural settlement. Altogether developing countries have re-attracted their policies option only by responding to problems after they have arisen with no apparent goals but to prevent cities from deteriorating to a "non-return" level.

By any national criteria, it is surely preferable for governments to anticipate and to provide further shelter-needs in urban centres. Therefore, governments should use the policy-tool, at their disposal, to optimise the spatial dimension of shelters demand by guiding and influencing shifts in national settlement-pattern.

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