

Workshop on "Chandigarh Urban Observatory"

In order to deliberate upon the scope and institutionalization of Urban Observatory for Chandigarh, a two day workshop was organized by the Joint Network in partnership with Panjab University and Chandigarh Administration. In the workshop, presentations were made by scholars and practitioners from UK and India.

The workshop was inaugurated by a panel comprising Prof. Arun K. Grover, Vice Chancellor, Panjab University (PU), Shri Anurag Aggarwal, Home Secretary UT, Dr. Manoj Arora, Director, PEC University of Technology, Mr. David Lelliott, British Dy. High Commissioner, Dr. Javed Agrewala, CSIR-IMTECH and Dr. Madhu Chitkara, Director, Chitkara University. Mr. B. Purushartha, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh shared his vision for Chandigarh Urban Observatory. The first day witnessed presentations from invited experts from Academia, Industry, Law and Civil Society. Group discussions were held on issues that are essential for developing a Chandigarh Urban Observatory as ' pulsating entity' taking cue from the Home Secretary's vision.

An urban observatory facilitates monitoring urban dynamics at the local level. It is typically a network of local stakeholders responsible for producing, analysing and disseminating data on a meaningful set of indicators. Under the UK-India Joint Network on Sustainable Cities, 8 UK Centres of Excellence led by University of Nottingham and 8 Indian institutions led by National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) are working on the possibility of establishing urban observatories in a few Indian cities. One of the ideas that have emerged through consultation among the network partners is the institutionalisation of city level systems for efficient data governance.

Data and information resources produced by the local network are used to support decision-making and formulation of evidence based policies. The recent global debates have highlighted the need for a coherent urban strategy and investment plan as one of the key criteria for any region to attract global capital. The Observatories can also make these cities globally visible especially as the Government of India is supporting major urban sector investment through new generation urban missions. The local partners in Chandigarh are Panjab University, Chandigarh Administration and affiliated institutions from Chandigarh Region Innovation and Knowledge Cluster (CRIKC). On account of its sustained engagements with Nottingham city as well as being part of the Smart Cities Mission, Chandigarh has been identified as one of the potential cities to establish an Urban Observatory.

What is an Urban Observatory?

An urban observatory facilitates monitoring urban dynamics at the local level. It is typically a network of local stakeholders responsible for producing, analysing and disseminating data on a meaningful set of indicators. Data and information resources produced by the local network are used to support decision-making and formulation of evidence based policies. There are several variants of urban observatories established by Governments, Think Tanks, Technology Companies and Civil Society groups. However, the idea was widely advanced by the UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatory. In India, the National Institute of Urban Affairs is engaging with various stakeholders for establishing urban observatories to address the complex entanglement of information in rapidly growing cities.

Urban Observatories for Indian Metropolitan Regions

Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai are three major city regions in India which have been striving to improve liveability through planned investments. Setting up an Urban Observatory in these cities can not only support effective monitoring of the impact of development projects in the city region, but also enable co-ordinated development in these urban regions. The recent global debates have highlighted the need for a coherent urban strategy and investment plan as one of the key criteria for any region to attract global capital. The Observatories can also make these cities globally visible especially as Government of India is supporting major urban sector investment through new generation urban missions. NIUA has established working relationships with Chambers of Commerce and Urban Development Authorities (Mumbai and Chennai) apart from Higher Education/Research Centres in all three cities. University of Nottingham which coordinates the UK network of research centres has been involved in a **Nottingham-Chandigarh** city exchanges. This offers an opportunity to develop a partnership with these cities to set up Urban Observatories. Since the current phase of funding from RCUK which regulates the availability of UK institutions is until March 2017, it is proposed to limit the work to the above mentioned four cities. However, based on the feedbacks from these four cities, a few more cities could be taken up from April 2017 provided the UK network gets additional funds from RCUK. Since Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad and Pune are large urban systems that have crossed 5 million populations, establishment of urban observatories in these cities will help in addressing their complex dynamics through proactive governance. Some of the smart cities such as **Chandigarh** and Dharamshala have also embedded the idea of urban observatory in their plans. Surat and Pune have initiated similar activities to capture the rich urban data and use it for creating an agile policy system.

