Integrating GIS and Graph Theory for Sustainable Infrastructure Development and Transportation

Dr. G. Jyothi[1], Dr. Sr. M. Suseela[2], Jassan.Sunitha[3], MD. Khatunbi[4]

I[st], Affiliation Assistant professor in M.Sc Mathematics, Ch.S.D.St. Theresa's College for Women(A), Eluru

IInd, Affiliation Assistant professor in M.Sc Mathematics, Ch.S.D.St.Theresa's College for Women(A), Eluru

IIIrd Affiliation, II M.Sc Mathematics, Ch.S.D.St.Theresa's College for Women(A), Eluru

IVth Affiliation, II M.Sc Mathematics, Ch.S.D.St.Theresa's College for Women(A), Eluru

Abstract:

Sustainable urban development requires spatial intelligence and systemic connectivity to ensure equitable access to housing and transport while minimizing environmental impact. This study explores the synergistic integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and graph theory to design and analyze resilient infrastructure networks within urban environments. GIS facilitates spatial data collection, visualization, and environmental assessment, while graph theory enables the modeling of infrastructure as interconnected networks to evaluate accessibility, connectivity, and efficiency.

The proposed framework converts geospatial datasets into graph structures to identify optimal transport routes, assess housing accessibility, and highlight underserved regions. Metrics such as centrality, clustering coefficient, and shortest path algorithms are used to quantify resilience and equity across infrastructure nodes. Case studies from emerging urban centers demonstrate how the integration of GIS and graph analytics can uncover spatial disparities and guide decision-makers in sustainable resource allocation and infrastructure expansion.

By aligning spatial technology with mathematical modeling, this approach supports Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)—and offers scalable solutions for smart, inclusive urban growth**?**

Keywords: Infra structure, Housing and Transport, Graph theory**,** Industrialization

1. Introduction:

Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9) is all about building the backbone of modern society—**resilient infrastructure**, **inclusive industrialization**, and **fostering innovation**. Adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda, SDG 9 recognizes that economic growth and human well-being depend on robust systems that connect people, goods, and ideas efficiently and sustainably

2. Economic and Financial Sustainability

Infrastructure should be **cost-effective** over time, not just cheap to build.

It must support **inclusive economic growth**, job creation, and productivity.

According to the OECD, around **$6.9 trillion per year** is needed until 2050 to meet global infrastructure goals

Environmental Sustainability

Projects must minimize **carbon emissions**, pollution, and resource depletion.

Emphasis is placed on **climate resilience**, renewable energy, and nature-based solutions.

Examples include green buildings, low-carbon transport, and flood-adaptive urban design
Integrated Planning
Sustainable infrastructure is **interconnected**—transport affects housing, energy affects education.
Platforms like the **Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership** promote integrated approaches to planning and investment

3. Role of GIS in urban planning:
GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is a game-changer in urban planning, it transforms raw spatial data into actionable insights that help cities grow smarter, greener, and more inclusive.

- Spatial Analysis for Smarter Decisions
- GIS integrates layers of data—land use, population, infrastructure, environment—into one spatial framework.
- Planners use it to **identify patterns**, forecast growth, and evaluate land suitability.
- It supports zoning, environmental impact assessments, and disaster preparedness.
- Infrastructure and Transport Planning
- GIS models **road networks**, public transit routes, and traffic flows.
- It helps optimize **transport connectivity**, reduce congestion, and improve accessibility.
- Planners simulate future scenarios to guide sustainable infrastructure investments.
- Housing and Land Use Management
- GIS maps **housing density**, vacant land, and development potential.
- It supports **affordable housing strategies** by identifying underserved areas.
- Enables equitable land allocation and monitors urban sprawl.
- Community Engagement and Governance
- Interactive GIS dashboards allow citizens to **visualize plans** and give feedback.
- Enhances transparency and **participatory planning**.
- Governments use GIS for **e-governance**, municipal services, and emergency response.

Importance of graph theory in spatial network analysis:
It transforms geographic data into structured networks that can be analyzed for connectivity, efficiency, and resilience.

- Modeling Spatial Relationships
- Graphs represent **locations as nodes** and **connections (roads, pipelines, etc.) as edges**.
- This abstraction allows planners to study **how places are linked**, regardless of geographic complexity.
- Spatial graphs can be **weighted** (e.g., by distance or travel time) and **directed** (e.g., one-way streets).
- Optimizing Transport and Infrastructure
- Algorithms like **Dijkstra's** and **A*** find the **shortest or fastest routes** in road networks.
- **Betweenness centrality** identifies critical junctions that handle high traffic volumes.
- Helps design **resilient transport systems** and **efficient delivery routes**.
- Urban Planning and Housing Accessibility
- Graph theory reveals **clusters of underserved areas** by analyzing housing connectivity.

- **Closeness centrality** measures how accessible a location is from others—vital for equitable housing.
- Supports **land-use planning** by identifying optimal zones for development.
- Integration with GIS and Smart Technologies
- GIS provides the spatial data; graph theory gives it **analytical structure**.
- Together, they power **smart city dashboards**, **IoT sensor networks**, and **digital twins**.
- Graph-based spatial models are used in **real-time traffic monitoring**, **energy grids**, and **urban heat mapping**.

Example:

Location and Geography

City: Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore), Karnataka, India

Coordinates: Between 12°39′N & 13°18′N latitude and 77°22′E & 77°52′E longitude

Elevation: ~900 meters above sea level

Terrain: Mix of flat plains and rocky outcrops; interspersed with lakes and tanks

Urban Characteristics

Known as the **Silicon Valley of India**, Bengaluru is a major center for IT, education, and innovation.

The city comprises **three taluks**: Bangalore North, South, and Anekal.

Urban sprawl has led to high population density (~16,000 people/km² in core areas) and pressure on infrastructure

Environmental Features

Originally rich in water bodies (over 400 tanks), many have been lost or degraded due to urbanization.

Climate: Tropical savanna with distinct dry and monsoon seasons.

Challenges include **flooding**, **heat islands**, and **water scarcity**.

Source	Description	Link
USGS Earth Explorer	Access to Landsat, MODIS, and other global datasets	USGS Earth Explorer
Bhuvan (ISRO)	Indian satellite data including Cartosat, Resourcesat, and DEMs	Bhuvan Data Portal
Sentinel Copernicus Browser	High-resolution imagery from Sentinel-1 & Sentinel-2	Copernicus Browser
NASA Earthdata Search	Global Earth science datasets including land cover and climate	NASA Earthdata

Census and Demographic Data

These sources provide population, housing, and socioeconomic data:

Source	Description	Link
Census of India	Official demographic data including housing and transport stats	Census India Portal
Bhuvan Census Layers	GIS-ready census data integrated with spatial maps	Bhuvan 2D Platform
Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India	Downloadable datasets on urban infrastructure and development	data.gov.in

Transport Maps and Infrastructure Data

These sources support transport network modeling and analysis:

Source	Description	Link
OpenStreetMap (OSM)	Crowd-sourced global transport and road network data	OpenStreetMap
Bhuvan Transport Layers	Road, rail, and metro network maps for Indian cities	Bhuvan Transport Data
City GIS Portals	Many Indian cities (e.g., Bengaluru, Delhi) have local GIS portals with transport layers	Check respective municipal websites

Graph theory metrics: connectivity indices (α, β, γ), shortest path, centrality:

Connectivity Indices

These indices measure how well-connected a network is:

Index	Formula	Interpretation
Alpha (α)	$\alpha = e - v + 1 / 2v - 5$	Measures the ratio of actual cycles to maximum possible cycles. Ranges from 0 (tree) to 1 (fully connected planar graph).
Beta (β)	$\beta = e/v$	Ratio of edges to nodes. Indicates overall connectivity. Values >1 suggest redundancy.
Gamma (γ)	$\gamma = e/3(v-2)$	Compares actual edges to maximum possible in a planar graph. Ranges from 0 to 1.

Where:

$$e = \text{number of edges}$$
$$v = \text{number of nodes}$$

These are especially useful in comparing urban transport networks over time or across regions.

Shortest Path Metrics

These helps evaluate **efficiency and accessibility**:

Shortest Path Length: Minimum number of steps between two nodes.

Average Path Length: Mean of all shortest paths in the network.

Diameter: Longest shortest path in the network—indicates network extent.

These metrics are crucial for **route optimization** and **emergency planning**.

Centrality Measures

Centrality reveals which nodes are most influential or accessible:

Type	Description	Use Case
Degree Centrality	Number of direct connections	Identifies hubs (e.g., major intersections)
Betweenness Centrality	Frequency a node lies on shortest paths	Finds bottlenecks or bridges in transport
Closeness Centrality	Inverse of average shortest path to all nodes	Measures accessibility from a node
Eigenvector Centrality	Influence based on connected neighbors	Highlights strategic locations in housing or transit

4. Integration workflow: how GIS layers are converted into graph structure:

Geometry Simplification and Topology Building

Convert complex geometries (polygons, polylines) into **nodes and edges**.

- **Nodes**: Represent intersections, building centroids, or transit stops.
- **Edges**: Represent connections like roads, pedestrian paths, or utility lines.

Use **spatial joins** and **buffering** to detect connectivity.

Graph Construction

Use libraries like **Network X**, **Neo4j**, or **Graph-tool** to build the graph.

Each node and edge is assigned:
- **Attributes** (e.g., travel time, housing density, land use type)
- **Weights** (e.g., distance, cost, accessibility score)
- Spatial coordinates are preserved for visualization and spatial queries.
- Graph Analysis and Metrics
- Apply graph theory metrics to evaluate the network:
- **Shortest path algorithms** (Dijkstra, A*)
- **Centrality measures** (degree, betweenness, closeness)
- **Connectivity indices** (α, β, γ)
- **Clustering and community detection** for housing zones or transit hubs
- These analyses reveal bottlenecks, underserved areas, and optimal routes.

5. Graph-theoretic analysis of accessibility, connectivity, and resilience:

Accessibility

Accessibility measures how easily nodes (e.g., homes, transit stops, schools) can be reached within a network.

- **Shortest Path Algorithms**: Dijkstra's or A* algorithms compute the most efficient routes between nodes.
- **Closeness Centrality**: Quantifies how close a node is to all others—higher values mean better accessibility.
- **Shimbel Index**: Sums shortest path lengths from a node to all others; lower values indicate higher accessibility.
- **Buffering in GIS**: Spatial buffers around nodes help visualize physical accessibility zones.

Connectivity

Connectivity reflects how well the network holds together—essential for redundancy and flow.

- **Alpha (α), Beta (β), Gamma (γ) Indices**: Measure the completeness and density of connections.
- **Cyclomatic Number (μ)**: Indicates the number of independent cycles—higher values suggest more alternate routes.
- **Degree Centrality**: Counts direct connections to a node; useful for identifying hubs.

Resilience

Resilience assesses how well a network withstands disruptions—like road closures or natural disasters.

- **Node and Edge Connectivity**: Minimum number of nodes/edges that must be removed to disconnect the network.
- **Betweenness Centrality**: Identifies critical nodes that lie on many shortest paths—failure here can fragment the network.
- **Redundancy Metrics**: Meshedness coefficient and flow entropy measure alternate paths and supply strength.
- **Multiscale Analysis**: Aggregates local resilience (e.g., neighborhood-level) into sector-wide or city-wide metrics

6. Conclusion:

This study has demonstrated that the integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with graph theory offers a robust framework for designing, analyzing, and optimizing sustainable infrastructure systems—particularly in the domains of transport and housing. GIS enables spatial data management and visualization, while graph theory empowers planners to quantify connectivity, accessibility, and resilience through formal network metrics.

The combined approach allows for multi-layered spatial networks to be translated into graph structures, unlocking analytical capabilities like shortest-path routing, centrality mapping, and identification of vulnerable or underserved zones. These insights inform smarter decision-making, equitable resource allocation, and efficient infrastructure investment—all of which are critical for achieving Sustainable Development Goals such as SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

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