



The *Euro*India Centre

**Concept note
of**

**an institute
of
habitat planning
and
governance
in India**

January 2008

1. **INDIA'S URBAN POPULATION** is expected to grow from a little over 300 million in 2007 to over 550 million in 2025, and then on to 800 million in the 2050's when its total population peaks at over 1500 million. By 2035, over 70 Indian cities will have a population of over one million; Mumbai-Pune is likely to have a population of 50 million and Delhi of 30 million.
2. Thus, over the next half century, India will make a historic transition from a rural and agrarian society to one that is at least half urban, while our growing economy becomes even more strongly manufacturing and services based.
3. This phenomenon will be more than a mere transition: it will be a transformation that will massively alter the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of the country. Over a quarter of a billion people will migrate from rural to urban areas; the urban share of India's GDP will rise from just over half to more than three-fourths and for the first time more political representatives could come from towns and cities than villages. India will change – and change dramatically.
4. Urbanisation is most certainly the single most important thing that is happening in our country. India has to prepare for this urban explosion which appears to be the *sine qua non* of a new, economically powerful India. But how should one go about doing this?
5. Cities are human-built ecosystems in which business processes function and, if this environment is good, can thrive. The health of this ecosystem determines the health of business processes. For businesses to thrive, their embedding cities too must thrive.
6. The world is witnessing a dramatic transformation of its business processes. Hierarchical structures are yielding place to globe-spanning networks, driven by mobile workforces, capital and information flows. The most successful networked business organisations seek the most attractive cities for their employees to work and live – leading to growing competition among cities to attract businesses, capital and talent.
7. The task before us is not just to cope with India's urbanisation but to ensure that our cities are liveable, secure and sustainable and provide a vibrant economic and social environment that nurtures innovation and diversity. This will both attract global players and provide domestic enterprise a strong platform to compete globally.
8. China is a keen competitor for the rewards of globalization. With massive investments in urban infrastructure, functioning city-wide water, power and transportation systems, and buoyant housing markets, nearly a hundred

million+ Chinese cities are poised to become the fulcrum of global growth. With a recent emphasis on energy and resource efficiency and scores of new eco-cities, China is close to two decades ahead of India.

9. Unfortunately India's track record does not make us proud. Over the past 60 years, we have seen a significant increase in our urban populations, accompanied by a decline in urban living conditions. Mumbai, with 55 percent of its people living in slums, is now the squatter capital of the world.
10. Of late, there seems to be a growing (and sometimes a heightened) awareness among policy makers that cities need to be better planned, built and managed. India needs to take advantage of this change of attitude. With economic growth, even money is no longer in short supply. If an urban project makes sense, money is often forthcoming.
11. But does India have the human resources to plan, design and manage the second largest urban transformation in human history, the people and the institutions that will ensure a sustainable quality of life that Indians so earnestly seek?
12. There is the rub. India does not. There is not only a dearth of competent urban planning, design and management professionals in employment, but also a huge shortfall in the capacity of educational institutions to train competent young professionals. The annual throughput of urban planners, designers and managers from existing planning and architectural schools leaves much to be desired. There are issues of numbers and of quality; of scale, professional excellence, funding and academic independence.
13. Most important, existing schools of urban planning deliver curricula developed in the 1970s and 1980s. They are unable to address the need to transact an integrated 21st century curriculum that straddles the engineering sciences, the social sciences and the management sciences to respond to the dramatic changes in society, the economy, technology and the environment that we expect to see.
14. Urban planning in India has for too long been an offshoot of Schools of Architecture, long after they ceased to be so in the West. 21st century urban planning, design and effective governance requires the combined skills of economists and finance experts; sociologists and social development workers; urban designers and ecologists; legal, security, health and education professionals; experts on water, power, transportation, sanitation, drainage, waste management, information technology, retail and wholesale trades, the media, recreation and sports, among others. In today's cities, planning education is incomplete without a rounded exposure to these urban sub-systems.

15. Professionals that are educated via a mix of undergraduate and graduate degree programmes, distance learning and in-service training are needed to fill a yawning gap in our municipalities, planning and development authorities, urban utilities, private and public infrastructure organisations, design firms, social enterprises and real estate companies. .
16. This is not unique to India. Interdisciplinary urban programmes are being re-invented in leading schools (e.g. MIT, Stanford, Cambridge and Parsons) to address contemporary OECD concerns. Their solutions however, have limited relevance to the scale, depth and operational challenges of India. India needs to develop an appropriate South Asian knowledge base, building on the experience of world class innovations like MIT's Open Course Ware (OCW) initiative and the rapid scaling of Chinese universities.
17. It is this quantitative, qualitative and knowledge deficit that the Indian project promoters wish to address. If the current gap is not filled by a well thought through scheme, it may well be filled by a melange of academically dubious private initiatives with primarily commercial objectives. This will further diminish improvement in the quality of Indian cities, businesses and the lives of hundreds of millions of poor urban residents.
18. It is for these reasons that they propose the establishment of a world class urban affairs institution (similar to our IIMs and IITs) that would:
- Be truly multidisciplinary, integrating and applying relevant knowledge from the engineering, social and management sciences from India, East Asia and the West;
 - Teach and apply planning, design, management and governance skills ;
 - Develop a world-class research and outreach programme;
 - Employ top professionals and researchers from India and abroad;
 - Attract high calibre Indian and international students, practitioners and clients;
 - Focus on addressing the challenges of urbanisation in India and other similarly placed countries, using India-appropriate technologies, management systems and institutions
19. To do this effectively, it would need to be:
- Networked with leading urban institutions and practitioners worldwide;
 - Of a large enough scale to make a significant impact in a decade or less;
 - Based on a network architecture that enables geographic and disciplinary scaling;
 - Financially and operationally independent of undesirable external influences;
 - A not-for-dividend organisation, but capable of raising equity capital and appropriate debt;

- Professionally managed and an attractive and convivial place to teach and learn;
- Located to minimise capital and operating expenses and yet provide exposure to a dynamic urban environment;
- Have an acceptable fee and scholarship structure and yet have academic and management compensation capable of attracting top-ranking global talent to India;

20. This will not be easy, as:

- the higher education sector in India is still heavily regulated, leaving little space for flexible and innovative institutions committed to world-class quality;
- the global talent pool of professionals and researchers with skills appropriate to the challenges of India's cities is somewhat thin;
- bridging the gap between the ability to pay of a large number of talented students and a fee-based revenue model seems difficult. But depending on grants and subsidies would open the institution to either corporate or political 'capture' that would defeat its mission

21. Yet, India clearly needs such an institution. This brief seeks to invite Europeans to contribute to the creation of such an institution. It would give a very concrete shape to *the EuroIndia Centre's* motto of Indians and Europeans "Joining hands for a shared future" in the area of managing urbanisation which is so critical not only to Indians but to all citizens of a common house called earth.

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