





problems of urban management can only be solved through a wider process of consultation and a willingness to experiment.

In India we found Chandrasekhar Hariharan and his initiatives in environmentally sound construction. Hariharan, founder of BCIL, a green construction company, has championed modern application of traditional technologies for housing colonies, making them energy efficient and water and waste neutral.

Anupam Mishra, who works with the Gandhi Peace Foundation and is an authority on traditional water systems, could tell us about what modern cities can learn from the past. Finally, the best urban governance solutions are getting rooted in community action and awareness of common property resources. This is the privatisation of the future. In water the old systems of harvesting rain and nurturing water sources remain relevant today.

We also zeroed in on the Monitor Group's team working on a financial model which will allow households with an income below Rs 12,000 a month to take loans and invest in housing. The Monitor Group is supporting a new breed of builders in Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad who find it challenging to create businesses that break

the price barrier in housing.

Indian planners, politicians and urban managers seem seriously influenced by the Americans, opting for wasteful and antiquated models of urban growth involving motorisation, suburban living and so on.

But the innovative ideas in urban governance that India could be picking up really come from the developing world. Penalosa's ideas of an inclusive city seem well suited to Indian realities.

Penalosa has been an influence on Dinesh Mohan at the IIT in Delhi. Mohan and his colleague Geetam Tiwari have designed the bus rapid transit system for Delhi. The BRT has run into lots of problems as any major effort in transportation well might. But the Delhi government's inability to implement the BRT is an example of how weak and unimaginative governance is oriented only to the middle and upper classes and can crumble in the face of the slightest resistance to a new idea. It also shows how entrenched the positions of the elite are.

Like Penalosa, Mohan is interested in issues of equality and safety. But Mohan is an academic, a man of ideas and theories. In the battlefield of the city where urban interests wrestle free-style with each other, you need a political tactician and a combatant with administrative skills. It won't do to float

in the realm of ideas alone. An evolving city therefore needs a Mohan-Penalosa kind of combination. Unfortunately, we haven't been blessed with one.

The day before Independence Day, as we drove back from work to our home 30 km out of Delhi, we found a highway jammed with traffic. This is an eight-lane highway built just recently to link the Indian capital with its southern fringes and beyond.

The people in their cars you could see, engines idling, ACs on because of the hot and humid August weather. But what about all those thousands of other commuters for whom there is no meaningful public transport system in Delhi or its suburbs and who pile into trucks and vans and just about any vehicle that will allow them on board so that they can get from one point to the next?

If a newly built highway, which was intended to be a national showpiece, can degenerate almost immediately into a mass of polluting automobiles, surely there is something wrong with the way in which we create urban systems?

Now, Gurgaon is on Delhi's periphery and is meant to be a world class city. It has the corporate offices of an array of international companies. If you tried to buy a flat here, you would pay as much as you would for a property anywhere in the world. Gurgaon also has shopping malls jammed one next to the other and office buildings just about anywhere they can be fitted in.

Not surprisingly, Gurgaon has made property developers fabulously rich. They compete to be in lists of the super wealthy. They flaunt their control over policy. Recently, the head of DLF, the largest Indian developer, told a business paper that all Indian cities should be put in the hands of real estate companies much like SEZs have been given to them.

But what have these companies delivered in Gurgaon? The city is almost entirely dependent on groundwater and could run out of supplies in the next five to 10 years. There are no landfill sites so garbage lands just about anywhere. The sewer system is inadequate and poorly connected. There has never been any public transport system with some buses only recently being introduced. Public toilets do not exist. There is no system for redressing civic complaints.

Gurgaon is the perfect example of what has gone wrong with urbanisation in India. Old and tired ideas, mostly mimicking American lifestyles, which even America is now trying to get out of, have been implemented here at the behest of certain business interests.

At a time when the world is going in for dense, integrated cities that are energy efficient, less polluting and socially inclusive, all over India experiments are being made in unsustainable suburban developments.

For India the challenge is to shape its cities by learning from others. On the flip side, we could wait for everything to get so bad that perhaps one day it will get a lot better. But by then, of course, the future would have left us behind.

<title>Let's go beyond the face lift in Indian cities</title>  
<author>Rita & Umesh Anand</author>  
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<description>India's future is being scripted in its cities. People have been moving to urban areas in increasing numbers to escape a stressed out rural economy. The quality of life Indian cities offer has acquired a new importance. Not only do they have to be sustainable for their own viability, but also for the sake of rural areas on which they have a deleterious effect. How Indian cities perform will define not just the country's economic progress, but its social and political stability as well. A great challenge and opportunity presents itself in choosing technologies and systems that accelerate growth, but are at the same time inclusive and environmentally sound.</description>  
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