

Sustainable Urbanization in India: Challenges and Opportunities

A Report

The two-day conference on *Sustainable Urbanization in India: Challenges and Opportunities* was organized by the **Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK)** held between **January 15 and 16, 2015** in collaboration with the **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB)**. It was funded by the **Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)**.

Within the Indian context, the conference intended to debate and discuss the effectiveness of recent urban programmes ('smart city' designs, 'rurbanization,' etc.) that are being prescribed and recommended within the umbrella of 'sustainable urbanization', the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. Within a broad space-time scale and considering the exploration of historical trajectories for particular Indian cities as an important methodology, the conference aimed to identify problems and possible measures to be followed as policy and programmatic actions that can be the guidelines for future research.

Around 38 senior professors, faculty members and research scholars from various universities and research institutes from every part of the country (north, south, east and west) presented papers touching upon almost each and every component relating to urban sustainability. There were case studies across Indian megacities and small towns covering a wide spatial scale. Nine technical sessions (Urban Planning and Governance, Gentrification, Civic Infrastructures, Urban Inequity, Disasters and Resilience, Waste Management, Emissions and Energy Use, Urban-rural/urban-pu linkages and Urban Ecology and Environmentalism) were conducted by eminent chairpersons with expertise in various disciplines of social sciences including economics, sociology, urban planning, history, etc. **Prof. Darshini Mahadevia**, Dean, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University, Ahmedabad provided the keynote address focusing on cities as epicentres of violence in recent times drawing on evidences from contemporary events. The keynote address was followed by thematic panel chaired by **Prof. Adriana Allen**, Development and Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL). The panel speakers were **Prof. O.P. Mathur**, distinguished professor of urban economics, National Institute of Urban Affairs, **Prof. Achin Chakraborty**, Director, Institute of Development Studies Kolkata and **Prof. Annapurna Shaw**, Public Policy and Management, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. While Prof. Mathur addressed the complex question whether India's urbanization and urban system and the way it is unfolding itself have the transformative attributes, Prof. Chakraborty gave a meticulous presentation on the structural limits to equitable

urbanization and Prof. Shaw examined urban sustainability as policy in the Indian context and brought out the implications of the proposed policies in the context of land availability and sustainability. The session ended with the chair's comment and reflections on wide spectrum of emerging urban policies and urbanisms including splintering urbanism, slum urbanism, green urbanism and their conceptual and contextual challenges which can be addressed by an alternative narrative of untamed urbanism to some extent.

On the evening of day one, a special panel was organized on the newly published book entitled *Governance of Megacities: Fractured Thinking, Fragmented Setup* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan. The special lecture on the book by author Sivaramakrishnan was followed by discussion by Prof. Mahalaya Chatterjee, Director, Centre for Urban Economics, Calcutta University.

The conference ended with a discussion on the post-conference agenda followed by vote of thanks delivered by the coordinator Dr Jenia Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Institute of Development Studies Kolkata.

The DPU, UCL has been kind enough to cover this event on their microsite <http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/news/peri-urban-pathways-water-justice> (date of access: March 11, 2015).