



Webinar

Brief 17:2021

CITIES OF THE FUTURE



**Pakistan Institute
of Development
Economics**

IN THE YEAR OF 2021



Pakistan Institute
of Development
Economics

WEBINAR - DAY II

Cities of the Future

Pakistan currently houses some of the largest cities in the world. It has about 20 cities with populations of above a million. Karachi and Lahore are among the twenty-five mega cities in the world. This rapid urbanization is accompanied by congestion, pollution, mobility issues, shortage of housing and other utilities and sprawl. Pakistan also has 40 percent of its urban population living in slums. There is clear shortage of urban public spaces, libraries, office and commercial spaces, and sustainable urban transportation. Our cities are not inclusive either. People living in slums, and street hawkers face a constant threat of eviction. Urban planning in Pakistan has not kept pace with the changes brought about by rapid urbanisation. Pakistani cities lack the vigour and dynamism of a modern, productive, competitive cities. Future of the countries are in the cities hence they should be better managed. In this webinar, we will learn from speakers how cities can do it right and how we can improve our current cities.

WEDNESDAY

20th January 2021
@ 07:00 PM PST

Moderator:

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque
VC, PIDE

Panelists:

Arif Hasan
(Architect and Urban Planner]

Dr. Naveed Iftikhar
(Urban Economist]

Sohail Afzal
(Consultant Roads & Transportations]

Samna Sadaf Khan
(Architect & Urban Housing Specialist]

Points to Ponder

- What will be the needs of a future city and anticipating challenges of the future?
- With rising urban population and more challenges ahead, how cities will provide equity to all?
- How future of the mobility will look like?
- Streets provides vibrance to the city economy, with rise of e-commerce and delivery service, how the landscape will evolve eventually.
- Some cities around the world are taking matters into their own hands, circumventing regional and federal government for better and effective legislation, generate their own funds and future strategies. What can we learn from these cities?

Preamble

Pakistan currently houses some of the largest cities in the world. It has about 20 cities with populations of above a million. Karachi and Lahore are among the twenty-five mega-cities in the world. This rapid urbanization is accompanied by congestion, pollution, mobility issues, shortage of housing and other utilities, and sprawl. Pakistan also has 40 percent of its urban population living in slums. There is a clear shortage of urban public spaces, libraries, office and commercial spaces, and sustainable urban transportation. Our cities are not inclusive either. People living in slums, and street hawkers face a constant threat of eviction. Urban planning in Pakistan has not kept pace with the changes brought about by rapid urbanization. Pakistani cities lack the vigor and dynamism of modern, productive, competitive cities. Future of the countries are in the cities hence they should be better managed. In this webinar, speakers and experts gathered to discuss how cities can do it right.

Points to Ponder

- What will be the needs and challenges of the future city?
- With the rising urban population and more challenges ahead, how cities will provide equity to all?
- What will the future of mobility look like?
- Streets provide vibrance to the city economy, with the rise of e-commerce and delivery service, how the landscape will evolve eventually.
- Some cities around the world are taking matters into their own hands, circumventing regional and federal government for better and effective legislation, generating their funds and future strategies. What can we learn from these cities?

Key Messages

- Mr. Arif Hassan, the eminent urban planner, was dismayed that we could not benefit from master-plans for cities essentially because the element of 'planning' was missing. In this era, cities grow and change at such an exponential pace that master-plans become invalid soon. But if we have objectives to achieve, strategies are there.
- Our master-planning for cities has failed. The other way to make our cities economical and livable for people is to map cities but unfortunately, there is no mechanism to map our cities. There is not even a single city in Pakistan that is mapped.
- Here "Mapping" means that cities are not only mapped physically but also in economical and social terms. All three factors of mapping merge in and take the form of a city.
- Mapping Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan, would imply first to identify those areas where economic activity takes place, followed by those areas which have low-income settlements, and then areas that have warehouses, transport, and cargo terminals. In the end, all the zones of economic activity and their linkages will be identified. Without mapping these linkages, it is difficult to understand how a city functions.
- The ecology of the city is also important. The present form and expansion of cities are destroying the ecology. This necessitates that we plan our future actions such that this ecology does not aggravate further. This would involve four things:
 - Plan for the majority which is lower and lower middle income
 - Determination of land use on environmental and social consideration, not on the land value alone
 - Protect and build the intangible heritage of the various communities that live there.
 - Protect the ecology of the city
- Land density laws need to be introduced in Pakistan and new settlements should be banned in areas where 400 people are living per acre because the land is scarce.
- For future cities, we have to understand the present cities - as to who does what, when, and how - and getting a grip of the trend, we then need to support the trends which are pro-equity and environment and curtail the trends which are anti equity and environment.

- In cities, there are several kinds of trends such as housing, transportation, commerce that need to be understood because we can not alter them, and strategies should be devised which we think are feasible.
- Dr. Nadeem remarked that our economists have failed in terms of planning our economy and cities, but why do our architects think people will live in two-story houses and will use only cars as a source for mobility?
- Mr. Sohail Afzal stated that land use and mobility are linked together, but mobility needs to be defined first. Mobility is the movement of people from one place or points to another. In short, mobility is accessibility. Accessibility is how people will access markets, education, hospitals, general recreational things, etc, and cities are built on the provision of mobility.
- The Dilemma with the Pakistani cities is that they are choked. To travel just a kilometer, an hour is required in peak hours. Our cities are car-oriented, new roads are built, old roads are widened to accommodate more cars. Almost thirty square feet is required just to park a single car. If our cities are car-oriented, where is the space for recreational activities?
- Dr. Naveed emphasized the need to understand that our future is urban, and within a few decades Pakistan will be fully urbanized. Further, Pakistan, with a median age of 23, is a young country and unfortunately, our urban planners and architects are designing and building infrastructure without thinking about the needs of youth.
- Youth need jobs, housing, and mobility but our urban structure does not have space to accommodate them. In "Mera Pakistan Mera Ghar " we don't have a single unit for young professionals, students, etc. Only 10% of households own cars, and youth need mobility but our current city design is fragmented and the rate of satisfaction from the public transit is extremely low (10 to 15%).
- Dr. Nadeem said that Lahore has 7 polo grounds, but no space for the poor, no playground for children, and no library which is the result of master-planning.
- Mr. Arif Hassan said that houses are being built in Pakistan on a massive scale. For example, in Karachi, 200,000 houses are under construction, which is constructed by private entities. Plus, the densification in slums is a cause to build more and more houses and the real challenge is can we sustain this? Can we help it to perform better? For that we have to know who is doing what, and how? Slums have reached six, seven floors and not a single penny is coming from the government! Nobody knows where the money is coming from? Instead of channelizing that money in a proper systematic way, the government starts taxing that money thus disrupting the chain.
- For building a city, a vision should be there. For example, when the Karachi Transformation Strategy was being built, the vision was that Karachi should be a world-class city. Critics argued that instead of a world-class city it should be a commuter and pedestrian-friendly city, which as a result would change the nature of investment of the city.
- In 2019, around 9600 vehicles were being registered per day in Karachi, while Bangkok registered 1650. Now how will this situation be tackled? There was a thought that a mass-transit system would help to tackle the mass registration of vehicles but the mass-transit system did not bring any reduction in vehicle registration and the registration still increased.

Conclusion

Cities are the core of innovation and economic growth but our cities are choked due to our car-friendly policies. Our planners are busy building and widening roads for cars and making life miserable for the pedestrians. The best practice to adopt is to give preference to pedestrians first, then cyclists, bikes, and then cars. Thus, making life easy for pedestrians and difficult for car owners. Through this transition, a sustainable transit-oriented system should be developed so that people can shift from cars to mass transit. The main hurdles in this change remain the cars and oil importer lobbies, which benefit from the status quo.

In conclusion, our cities need to be mapped, which will help us understand what is happening and how it is happening, and what amendments are needed in the current structure to increase gains from city life.



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