



# MASTER PLANNING

What is it and what it creates



## Webinar

Brief 19:2021



**Pakistan Institute  
of Development  
Economics**

**PIDE WEBINAR**



# Master Planning

## What is it and what it creates.

All major cities in Pakistan are in the process of reviewing and updating their master plans. Our cities spend resources and time developing masterplans to lock themselves and their cities into a predetermined path of growth and lifestyles. When life does not adjust to these preordained plans for their life, cities and their residents end up in years of strife with encroachments happening involving lawsuits and law enforcement. Cities try to grow and modernize but planners go to the extent of destroying buildings with court injunctions only because they are a couple of feet taller or longer than allowed by stringent regulations. Yet the push for master-planning continues across Pakistan hoping to keep cities frozen for long periods of time from 15-30 years. Having seen a boom after the second world war, master plans are increasingly seen as a thing of the past. Reasons for this disillusionment are many:

**TUESDAY**

**19th January 2021**  
**@ 06:00 PM PST**

**Moderator:**

**Dr. Nadeem ul Haque**  
VC, PIDE

**Panelists:**

**Nadeem Khurshid**  
(Urban Expert,  
CEO 4th Dimension Consulting]

**Dr. Nausheen H. Anwar**  
(Prof. City & Regional Planning,  
Director Karachi Urban  
Lab(KUL)) 1BA

**Dr. Murtaza Haider**  
(Prof. Ryerson University,  
Research Director Urban Ana-  
lytics Institute )

### Points to Ponder

- Master plans are forward-looking, laying the building foundations of a city for the coming twenty years. However, they rely on the present as well as past data to project future demand for infrastructure and public utilities. Little do the planners realize that these projections are often faulty.
- In Pakistan, master-planning seems to be an inside job between planners and builders who know them. Public participation in the planning process is often perfunctory or non-existent. These plans, therefore, are never owned by the community nor do planners recognize the needs of the people.
- Master plans are often based on unrealistic assumptions about the proposed economic potential of the area as well as the requirements of the population.
- Master plans are static in nature, made at one point in time by a select few which makes them irrelevant fast and it's the city dwellers who end up having to face all the ills of that planning.
- There is little flexibility built in to evolve the plan and move the city forward. They are often not updated on time, leaving room for vested interests to intervene and change rules in their favor.
- Master plans seem to dictate how markets should develop leaving no room for them to find their own level. It is thanks to master planning that we see a shortage in several areas in our cities.



## Preamble

All major cities in Pakistan are in the process of reviewing and updating their master plans. Master plans are developed by urban governments to manage a city's land use, zoning and building regulations, and provision of civic amenities. These plans are prospective and require extensive data to plan. Our cities spend resources and time developing master plans to lock themselves and their cities into a predetermined path of growth and lifestyles. When life does not adjust to these preordained plans for their life, cities and their residents end up in years of strife with encroachments happening involving lawsuits and law enforcement. While the world has moved on from this archaic practice, the push for master-planning continues across Pakistan, keeping cities frozen for long periods. Having seen a boom after the second world war, master plans are increasingly seen as a thing of the past in the West.

## Points to Ponder

- Master plans are forward-looking, laying the building foundations of a city for the coming twenty years. However, they rely on the present as well as past data to project future demand for infrastructure and public utilities. Little do the planners realize that these projections are often faulty.
- In Pakistan, master-planning seems to be an inside job between planners and builders who know them. Public participation in the planning process is often perfunctory or non-existent. These plans, therefore, are never owned by the community nor do planners recognize the needs of the people.
- Master plans are often based on unrealistic assumptions about the proposed economic potential of the area as well as the requirements of the population.
- Master plans are static, made at one point in time by a select few which makes them irrelevant fast and it's the city dwellers who end up having to face all the ills of that planning.
- There is little flexibility built in to evolve the plan and move the city forward. They are often not updated on time, leaving room for vested interests to intervene and change rules in their favor.
- Master plans seem to dictate how markets should develop leaving no room for them to find their level. It is thanks to master planning that we see a shortage in several areas in our cities.
- Master planning has a dark side which was founded a hundred and fifty years back.

## Key Points

- Dr. Nadeem began the discussion and asked the panelists what the master plan does? Why do we need it? And what are the issues around it? What is master planning?
- Dr. Nasheen Anwar said that a master plan is a dynamic long-term planning document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development. Master planning is about making the connection between buildings, social settings, and their surrounding environments.
- Master plans are 100-150 years old, in a sense of its history.
- Planning can be done by forecasting everything virtually like demographics, population growth, how cities might evolve and how people will live in those cities, how cities might inhabit.
- Dr. Nadeem said that we know that master planning is an instrument of state power, but economics has shown us that planning is a complete failure after the break down of the Soviet Union. Planning means that a person has all the knowledge in the world, so he can tell others how to work. Is master planning the same thing as how we should live in cities? Is it a technocrat or planner who has to control everything?
- Mr. Nadeem Khurshid said that from the past two and a half years, the debate is going on whether we should have master plans or not, and this debate escalated when Prime Minister Imran Khan said that master plans of all the cities will be made.

## Origin of Master plans

- Mr. Nadeem Khurshid stated that master plans originated in response to the public health crisis. In 1905, the people of Britain started invading cities following industrialization. Due to congestion and lack of basic infrastructure, environmental pollution, and coal burning, a new and mutated strain of diseases started evolving.
- In response to the problem, the architects of that time started thinking about the city development without harming the urban life and properties of people living there.
- In 1907, Britain implemented the "Cities and Regional Planning Act" to reduce the congestion of people in cities.

- In 1926, American courts intervened in city planning by legislating pro-zoning acts.
- In the case of Pakistan, what is called master planning is a zoning act, which divides the cities into different zones which demarcates areas for the elite, government servants, middle-class, schools, commercial areas, etc.
- City planning has three primary objectives - housing, work, and leisure and these points should be integrated in such a way that people can easily move around.
- Unfortunately, the urban-planning in Pakistan is 100 years old, following plans that were developed by the West in their beginning phase. Those plans were based on zoning, and with time the West realized that the philosophy of free-market was missing out, and the revenue-generating businesses are not facilitated in that structure.
- Dr. Nadeem opined that we are a soviet colony. We don't have any thinking and are following a command economy mechanism. Our master planned cities have no space for schools, markets, poor people, the only space we have is for cars. In short, in the name of modernism, we have diverted our cities to cars-oriented instead of people-oriented. The idea of car-oriented cities evolved in 1960 and planners of that time realized their mistake and again reverted to the idea of the "cities for people" not for cars. Unfortunately, our thinking dates back to the cities for cars.
- Dr. Murtaza Haider highlighted the governance structure of Pakistan and said we inherited this system from the United Kingdom after independence.
- He further stated that there is no problem with the plans, the issue is with the implementation of the plans. In Pakistan, there are multiple bodies (TMA, DHA, CDA, Cantonment Board, UC) that run the cities and there is a tussle for power among them which complicates things. The city authorities want the power to rule the city but when it comes to problem-solving everyone tries to hide.
- Another interesting fact is that we still have Cantonment Boards which were established on 16 January 1924, but those institutions are still active and working, just three years short of their centennial year.
- In Lahore, almost nine agencies are in a tug of war on how to run the city. In Karachi, fourteen agencies are fighting to gain the control of city's administrative power.
- Our cities and plans need to have shared values, vision, public participation, a local government that can implement the laws and plans, defined geographic boundaries to avoid unnecessary urban sprawl, roles, and responsibilities that ensure single authority, not multiple authority and avoiding redundancies.
- The solution to all the mess that our plans created is that we should build new cities in which one not only owns a house but also the street (moral ownership), which will organize people at the grass-root level and slowly they can politically stabilize themselves and at the end, they can demand a local government system which will have a keen eye on the issues and act accordingly.
- Dr. Nadeem responded that the concept of building new cities is bad. Islamabad took sixty years in its creation, and still, it trails and contributes nothing. Gwadar has been hanging for thirty years and is nowhere. The question remains whether there will be a full stop to the master planning or it will control our life not?
- Planning is the last resort of the Soviet which prevails in the veins of Pakistan, while every nation in the world has left the master planning.

## Conclusion

Master Plans have been extensively imposed in the cities of Pakistan. The problem with these plans is that they are never implemented and those that do get implemented are based on individualism, which means that cities are car-centric and designed for single-family homes, instead of people and public places. Car-centrism was adopted in 1960 and was soon abolished due to the disasters it created. Our planners and courts are unaware of the land use and distribution. Plans are developed at high costs but are of no value in the end. Cities are the core of innovation, creativity, and revenue generation. Cities like Tokyo and New York alone generate over 2 trillion dollars a year which is more than the annual budget of countries like Italy and Spain. They are generating massive revenue because they are not restricted by excessive planning and markets are allowed to function. We have to seek lessons from them if we want our cities to prosper.

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