

SHAPING THE CITIES OF OUR FUTURE

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A RETROSPECTIVE

URBAN HABITATS FORUM

INDIA HABITAT CENTRE
LODHI ROAD
NEW DELHI - 110003
NCR, INDIA
TEL: +91-11-24682001-9
FAX: +91-11-24682010

MIRABILIS ADVISORY (P) LTD.
SUITE 1019, 10th FLOOR
DLF GALLERIA CONDOMINIUMS
GURGAON - 122009
HARYANA, INDIA
TEL: +91-124-423-8452
FAX: +91-124-423-8458

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Part A

Introduction

“Urbanisation in India: Creating and Sustaining Liveable Spaces for People” formed the pivot of discussion at the inaugural celebration of Urban Habitats Forum, the nascent public-private partnership between Mirabilis Advisory and India Habitat Centre.

The Forum aimed to provide a collaborative platform for both multi disciplinary thinkers and change makers, to push for innovation in the shaping of future cities of India. In keeping with this vein of

educating people about urbanisation and mobilising action, the event held at the India Habitat Centre on June 5 attracted a diverse audience

Raj Liberhan, Director, India Habitat Centre introduced the agenda of shaping urbanisation in India. Through his welcome address, Kiran Karnik, President, India Habitat Centre, elucidated the need for realising better, liveable spaces. Further building upon the thrust of the discussion, chief speaker, Sanjeev Sanyal, Regional Chief Economist, Deutsche Bank, spoke about "The Mirabilis Matrix: Rethinking India's Urban Strategy". Phillip Rode, Executive Director, Urban Age, then launched the exhaustive, nodal Urban Age Report. As a summation, a panel discussion was moderated by Anupam Yog, Managing Director of Mirabilis Advisory hinged on the complex challenges of creating and sustaining liveable cities in India.

Urbanisation: Citizen's Concerns

"The pressures of urban living build up their own kind of agendas and priorities which perhaps contribute to some degree of dissatisfaction as far as the individual's aspirations are concerned," said Mr. Raj Liberhan, Director, India Habitat Centre, setting the tone for the discussion. He stressed upon the shaping of an urban environment that has by common consent, both adequacy of infrastructure and urban spaces for expression of our cultural dimensions. To create and maintain such an environment that is congenial for growth, it is essential for us to keep pivotal public spaces alive and sacred amidst the burst of area chomping concrete and chrome construction. Mr. Liberhan also stressed upon the tandem need for individual aspirations to discover creative conduits and meet with excellence in various niches, while living in a compatible environment.

What emerges as the nodal need in the present urban climate, is an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the core values in the profile of cities. This insight functions as a vital tool in shaping the manner of growth most congenial with the profile of citizenship of each urban dwelling. "Very often the state is over keen to regulate private spaces and let public spaces be ruled by chaos," emphasised Mr. Liberhan. "Our ambition is to reckon concretely the sub-cranial factors compelling growth and the policy framework and the responses managing this growth."

Creating a Sense of Ownership

Instilling and nourishing a sense of ownership in every person helps to build upon a collective responsibility towards the maintenance of public spaces. This willingness to contribute, to invest time and effort and to protect and nurture the spaces involves a greater involvement of people at the decision making level and a substantial quantum of consistent communication, emphasised Karnik.

While stressing upon hard infrastructure like power and transport, we often forget the crucial role played by soft infrastructure, like cultural institutions, that sculpt the soul of the city, shape each one of us and give urban spaces a meaningful dimension. "A city is not just a collection of economic entities, either individuals or companies and factories and service institutions. It is equally or probably even more a collection of the culture of the place which comes from the literal art and culture, and also comes from the broad culture of how our city is and how it behaves," pointed out Karnik.

To texture liveable urban dwellings, it is vital that we give both physical and metaphorical space to cultural institutions. Karnik explained how through the preparatory phase for the Commonwealth Games to be held in New Delhi in 2010, necessary soft infrastructure could be created for the city dwellers, that would both benefit them and bind them in togetherness as an urban community.

The Development Derby

"We think of ourselves as a civilisation and yet today India is one of the last, great, unurbanised societies on this planet," said Sanyal as he outlined sharp comparisons between the pace of the nation's urbanisation as against that of other countries.

He quoted the example of China, a country that has experienced a striking rate of urbanisation over the past 25 years, with approximately 60 per cent of its population residing in urban areas today. The developed world is 70 to 80 per cent urbanised and relatively underdeveloped countries like Indonesia are clocking an urbanisation level of 48 per cent. In India, 70 per cent of the population still lives in rural areas but the rapid economic development is bringing in an urban future for the country. "In 1950, India was urbanised to the extent of 17 per cent of our population, in 2001 we just about made it to 28 percent, suggesting that it took us half a century to increase urbanisation level by 10 per cent," he telescoped.

The sluggish rate of growth and lopsided form of urbanisation can be attributed to the aching lack of research on urbanisation in the country. "Whenever we think about urban ideas in India, we instantaneously think civil engineering. But a city is much more than just the buildings that live on it. The city is really about the people that inhabit it and the software of cities, the interaction of people, the economic and social activities that they carry out in this urban space is really what it is all about," said Mr. Sanyal.

He explained the phenomenon of city-centric urban growth. It is the lure of work related opportunities and proximity to utilitarian facilities that consistently brings in the population from rural areas and smaller cities to the bigger metros. As these mega-cities have grown, they have further attracted migrants both from rural areas and from the smaller towns in order to feed the top-down growth pyramid. In turn, this has led to the many slums that dot all Indian cities."

Unfortunately, in present times, the process of urbanisation is being seen as an anomaly that is wrenching India's 'true' rural identity: A dichotomy as the country bore the Indus Valley civilisation 5000 years ago through well-planned cities. Today India needs to prepare for the influx of millions of people. The World Urbanisation Prospects (2007 Revision), published by the United Nations, projects that 197 million Indians will move to urban areas between 2007 and 2025. With India's population set for 40 per cent urbanisation by 2035, Sanyal emphasised the need for sound vision and serious municipal planning to realise the crucial economic and social infrastructure.

The Liveability Menu

"If we correctly urbanise, cities are perhaps the best and most efficient way of storing people. But if we do it right," said Sanyal. "For a city to work, it must focus on the people who inhabit it and not the buildings. Twenty-first century cities will be places where people of all classes can live, work and play. In other words, "liveability" is a very important part of what we should expect from new urban centres."

The pulse point of urbanisation lies in the effective building and sound maintenance of soft infrastructure. Sanyal spotlighted the creation of the emotional and intellectual vacuum between a city and its intellectual ecosystem, through the instance of the walled off institution of IIT, Kanpur. A classic illumination of how rigid segregation makes a potential diffusion of ideas wither before inception.

Emphasising the changing dynamics of city profiles and the needs of people inhabiting them, he explained, "Cities are eventually agglomerations of human capital but you will get good quality human capital only if it is a liveable place. If you can get an area where high human capital people want to live, you create great cities." The aim must be to integrate new innovations into the urban infrastructure for creating liveable spaces. The Mirabilis Matrix encapsulates these issues through its grid of three verticals: Hardware, Software and Governance, and three horizontals: Livability, Economic Competitiveness and Environmental Footprint. Successful urban planning lies in organically combining these facets.

Urban Age India

Phillip Rode, Executive Director, Urban Age, released the pivotal research report 'Integrated City Making' as part of the Urban Age India project, to mirror the key challenges in urban governance and integration of city planning, design and transport.

In 2007, the Urban Age, undertook a research programme in four heavily populated Indian cities: Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi and Bangalore, to understand and assess how these cities are responding

to the challenges of explosive growth, and to compare these approaches to those adopted in other cities throughout the world.

The thrust of Rode's address lay in the method of integrated city making, synchronising development through intelligent governance and in the issue of special planning and transport. He earmarked the importance of a single long-term assessment of a city's assets and weaknesses. Rode drew comparatives between the six Urban Age cities: New York, Shanghai, London, Johannesburg, Mexico City and Berlin, and the four Indian cities, bringing in the need for a combined consensus based effort to activate structured urbanisation in India. "So often it is growth which overtakes all our planning," he said, summing up the nodal problem areas in lagging response time, outdated plans and laws, reactive planning, and incrementalism.

It is a combination of insufficient planning skills, the shortage of professional planners and diffusion of systematic planning that ails urbanisation in India. Rode pointed out that the problem areas were compounded through further missing self-correction and uncoordinated revisions of the state of affairs. He explained that astute city shaping lies in realising the right organisational infrastructure and successful symbiosis of the marginalised pedestrian traffic culture with an efficient transport system. What is imperative is the sectoral integration of cities for improved efficiency. "Visions must be grounded in reality and must take into consideration what is in the place," he said, underlining transport as the biggest driver of modern urban form.

Engineering a demand management solution to comply with the evolving transport needs of city dwellers, Singal suggested the need for a multi-modal integrated transport system. The implementation of such a system, he maintained, complied with the nodal objectives of the Mirabilis matrix for better cities: Liveability, competitiveness, and an environment-friendliness.

Madhav and Ayush, of Anagram Architects and Quicksand Design Studio, strengthened the concept of the multi-modal integrated transport system further through a film montage on the urban transport grid and its facets, in New Delhi. "We found a different way of looking at the city, of exploring new places, new environments, a different rhythm, and a completely new way to travel," they said, stressing upon the need for developing pedestrian culture and maximising the use of public transport.

"The Ministry of Urban Development has mentioned the notion of a unified transport agency, which in the Indian context seems very alien, but is something to think about," added Yog

In summation, the Forum explored viable options of breathing in urban renewal and focussed upon integrating the ways we think and work.

Part B: Introductory Speeches

Liberhan, Director, India Habitat Centre

There has always been this desire and ambition on everybody's part to find a nice, little, homely spot in a place which you come to nourish and love. Yet somehow the pressures of urban living build up their own agendas and priorities that contribute to a degree of dissatisfaction as far as the individual's aspirations are concerned.

The issue has always been, how do individual aspirations find creativity and excellence in their different niches while at the same time living in compatibility with the environment. In our effort to create liveable cities, the crucial determining factors are our needs and desires, as both individuals and as a community. Very often we find the state over-keen to regulate our private spaces while letting the public spaces be ruled by chaos.

How can a concerned citizen discover and assert solutions for an urban environment, which by common consent has adequacy of infrastructure and urban spaces for cultural expressions? A dialogue will therefore have to ascertain the core values in the profile of the cities and what manner of growth is most compatible with such a profile of the citizenship. Our ambition is to reckon concretely the sub-cranian factors compelling growth and the policy framework that manages this growth.

Will our public places be piazzas like city squares or will they be replicas of the Mall Roads of our own heritage. How will the public spaces be held inviolate and sacred? The rules must be set and they must not be subject to capricious interpretations of the ever-changing officialdom.

Kiran Karnik, President, India Habitat Centre

It is critical that we make sure that people in the city experience a sense of ownership. We need to build upon this relationship to imbue in ourselves both a sense of a right as well as a sense of a duty of protecting and nurturing it. This involves active communication and involvement of more people at the decision making level. Essentially we need to build upon a collective responsibility, to safeguard and nurture public spaces, both physically and metaphorically.

Cultural institutions shape each one of us and give the city a meaning. A city is not just a collection of economic entities, either individuals or companies and factories and service institutions. It is equally a collection of the culture of the place, that stems from its art and culture.

In the context of the Commonwealth Games 2010, we need to look at how do we use this opportunity to create things necessary for New Delhi in terms of its long-term perspective and term growth. We

need a vision within which we create these and praise these and that may be something, as we want to talk about.

Sanjeev Sanyal, Regional Chief Economist, Deutsche Bank

Urbanisation is perhaps the most extraordinary phenomenon we will see in India over the next half century. It will change India's economy, society and politics. It will change the way we think of ourselves as a civilisation. Yet today India is one of the last great unurbanised societies on this planet. More than half the population of the world now lives in cities and yet in India, less than 30 per cent of India's population lives in urban spaces. A wide definition as one could argue many of India's cities are not cities at all. The developed world is almost 70-80 per cent urbanised. Even a relatively underdeveloped country, Indonesia, has an urbanisation level of 48 per cent.

China is the most striking example of rapid urbanisation over the last 25 years. In 1980 China had an urbanisation rate of 18 per cent : The level of urbanisation we had in 1950 and over the last 25 years. China has seen very rapid GDP growth and a marked appreciation in standards of living. Today 55-60 per cent of their population lives in urban areas. It is the transformation of China that has tipped the balance of the world population into urban areas.

India is set to experience a similar transformation. In 1950, we were urbanised to the extent of 17 per cent of our population. In 2001 we made it to 28 per cent, suggesting that it took us half a century to just increase urbanisation level by 10 percentage points. Almost all urbanisation we have had over the last half a century has been oriented towards our larger cities. Cities with a population of one million or more, account for 40 per cent of India's urban population. The equivalent ratio for China is five percent, suggesting basically the urbanisation that we have experience in India is essentially that of people migrating from smaller cities and towns to large cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. This explains why Mumbai has 16 to 19 million inhabitants in its entire urban space, whereas Shanghai, the leading city of China, has a drastically lower population of 12 million.

The reason for this lopsided urbanisation is that India has not really urbanised as it did not really industrialise. There is fixed width of services oriented growth process. India's growth has been due to the middle class. This section of the population agglomerated in major cities, resulting in the growth of sectors like information technology.

We have virtually no studies on how urbanisation works in this country. There is absence of a body of research about understanding our cities, how we are urbanising and so forth. Through this Forum, we are attempting to create a platform where we can study this phenomenon and revise the way in which we visualise our cities.

Whenever we think of urban ideas in India, we instantaneously think civil engineering. While building a city, we think in terms of hardware. But a city is much more than just the buildings that live on it. The city is about the people that inhabit it and the software that stitches its people together through economic and social activities.

Yet why do we pay high rents in polluted climes to live in these cities when we can live anywhere and telecommute? The 21st century cities are no longer needed for reasons of production. They are needed because we need proximity to amenities like schools, hospitals, temples, museums and theatres. The premium is on face-to-face human interaction. Study the random interaction and the consequent thriving in the financial sector. For instance, London today is the world's shipping hub yet not a single ship goes there. All the logistics including finance and legal work activates itself in London. The shifting around of boxes on a ship is almost irrelevant to shipping. In the same way 21st century cities are about carrying out value through direct human interaction. That is what cities are for and that is why the software of cities is far more important in my view than the hardware. The hardware is only important to the extent it actually allows the software to function.

The agglomeration of human capital and the consequent interaction is vital. Some of the greatest cities in the world are also reputed university towns, like Boston, Oxford, New York, Columbia and Cambridge. Most of these places have become truly vibrant by virtue of housing these intellectual institutions. Yet compare the environs to that in Kanpur, home to our best engineering school, IIT. It is a walled-off institution, an insulated intellectual ecosystem, with absolutely no interaction with Kanpur. Whereas across the globe, these hubs of education inspire spin offs from social activities to create a unique urban complexion. There has been focus only on hardware, not software, in the building of our cities.

Liveability forms an important bone in the matrix of astutely planned urbanisation. Cities are eventually agglomerations of human capital but you get good quality human capital only if it is a liveable place. If you ensure that high human capital people live in your city, you will get growth irrespective of whether workspaces are constructed here or not.

New York is one of the great financial hubs in the world, yet nobody lives in New York in the financial field because of Wall Street. They live there because of the theatres, the central park. Likewise, the pulsepoint of London is West End Theatre. In essence, we need hardware for urbanisation, but we need to go beyond civil engineering. The software we build needs to create urban buzz. Like the museums, cricket pitch and theatres the British built in South Mumbai are more important than the chrome buildings that dot the island city. The third aspect is a grid of efficient rules and fair taxation applied through sound governance.

Economic competitiveness facilitates the clustering of human capital. It attracts an influx of good quality human capital through immigration. What is important is retaining the cluster. Kolkata was one of the great cities of India yet it went into major decline as it de-clustered. The environmental footprint is the last vital horizontal. If we correctly urbanise, cities are perhaps the best and most efficient way of storing people, but if we do it right. To sustain a planned growth of the urban sprawl, an effective

transport system is needed in tandem with an appreciable pedestrian culture. The hardware of a city needs to facilitate this.

Phillip Rode, Executive Director, Urban Age

I am going to structure my talk into four different parts. I am first going to introduce the Urban Age programme and contextualise it with global urbanisation. I am then going to introduce the part where we were working with experts, decision-makers, NGO representatives and the media in India to understand the pressing issues concerning urbanisation in the country. The third part then zooms into our comparative exercise where we selected, in addition to four Indian cities we have been investigating, four international cities. As a summation, I will deduce what constitutes the building blocks for integrated city making.

Last year, for the first time, more than 50 per cent of the world population was living in urbanised areas. This figure is expected to appreciate to 60 per cent by 2030. In this series, I am going to offer you an overview how the cities over one million inhabitants grew in terms of numbers. The studies reveal declining cities and only limited growth. The Urban Age programme was keen to understand how this growth really affects the individual city. Clearly there is still the agglomeration effect and the capacity for proximity, that are key drivers in making our cities work.

As a proxy for many measures of density, the key parameter here, we have plotted population densities for six cities in 2005 and 2006. Shanghai, with a density peak of 100,000 people per sq. km., resembles a village when compared to London. In New York, the residential density peak of about 50,000 people per sq. km. is achieved through verticalisation, by having buildings that rise high up into the sky.

The same density level is achieved by the following typology. In Mumbai, there is a severe compromise in personal living space that measures less than 3 sq.mts per person. As opposed to the America, where there is today has about 60 sq.mts per person. The European average too centres around 40 sq.mts per person. The polarised instance is that of London's suburban area: The terrace housing or single-family homes with a high percentage of garden, high percentage of road coverage, that ultimately lead to the city sprawling with severe impact on social and environmental sustainability. Shanghai has over the last 25 years increased the number of buildings above 8-storeys by 10,000. Today the city has more high-rise buildings than the entire west coast of the United States.

Cities occupy more than 50 per cent of the world's population and have become proxy for the world's pressing problems. Like Sao Paulo drastically summarises the enormous conflicts of rich and poor living within close proximity. Urban inequality and the global environmental challenge are crucial challenges to understand with regard to cities. Today, 75 per cent of the global carbon dioxide emission is produced in cities although and this is the warning, only 50 per cent live in them. Our research involved interactions with experts from diverse fields like transport engineering to sociology, from anthropology

to architecture and from criminology to policy-making. We engaged with the mayors, civic leaders and academicians to realise conversations relevant to planned urbanisation.

The '*Integrated City Making report*' covers the first six Urban Age cities: New York, Shanghai, London, Johannesburg, Mexico City and Berlin. It derives a comparative analysis on the set of issues concerning each. The last section includes innovative projects that push the agenda of planned urbanisation in a positive way.

The second phase of the Urban Age programme examines the implications for key challenges facing urban India and gives us an in-depth understanding of the profile of cities in the country. As part of the research, we connected with political decision makers together with media practitioners from national and local media. The focus of our study were the four Indian cities: New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore. Our choice of cities stemmed from their varied industrial base, different stages of their development pattern and their myriad political fabric.

Approximately 47 per cent of the people we spoke with referred to planning, 41 per cent to transport and 32 per cent to governance as the key problem areas. "So often it is growth which overtakes all our planning," mentioned an expert during the course of our discussions. What we have behind the pace of change are the five set of problems. The growth overtaking planning, lagging response time, outdated plans and laws, reactive planning, and incrementalism.

The issue of insufficient planning skills, shortage of professional planners and diffusion of professional planning contribute to the dilemma. Interference from public as well as from technical experts lacking expertise as planners compound the challenges. The need of the hour is integrated planning to weld together astutely conceived planning exercises.

Public transport poses another massive challenge in India. It is this disconnect that makes the daily lives of people very difficult. The network of buses and trains is heavily overburdened by the sheer number of commuters. The Indian roads are choked with motorised vehicles. What further adds a painful dimension is the severely marginalised pedestrian culture and the lack of space for rail extensions.

There is a missing organisational integration, absent self-correction for improving the integration and segregation of planning scales. What plays a decisive role here is city shaping. "The big question is whether master planning is a good way to plan for urban growth considering the dynamism of the city itself," said another expert we spoke with. What confronts us behind the vital issue of city shaping is the absence of a blue print and inflexible policies and projects. I believe that taxi service is one of the possible solutions to tackle the increase in private car use.

London has been cutting edge in terms of urban policy in particular in transport planning. Berlin experienced a significant change after reunification and is today probably regarded as one of the best integrated cities in the world following massive infrastructure development. The last city is Johannesburg where the various layers of government from the national, state, to the municipality are organised in spheres of government as equal partners.

Owing to the city's complexity, integration and density, more than 55 per cent walk to work in Mumbai: The most sustainable pattern of movement imaginable. In London, unmindful of the superb public transport network, close to 40 per cent of people drive in the city. In comparison, car users in Mumbai do not even account for 2 per cent of the trips in the city.

Governance is crucial for future development: Who governs what and within which territory? All the cities are unable to expand their administrative boundaries to their functional urban region. What is interesting in the Indian case is that the area of the municipal city is particularly small: In Mumbai it measures simply 450 sq. km. and in New Delhi close to 1600 sq. km. We then compared government structures by plotting all functions related to the urban domain, from the national, the state and the municipal government. In the case of New Delhi, there is a diverse split from the national, all the way to the municipality, in the area of public transport. There is virtually no connection between these two ways of thinking about the city. A similar pattern re-emerges in Mumbai. The city's strength is the local train network, under the aegis of the Central Government. The roads are under the purview of the state government and the buses come under the local level administration.

Even London with its governance reform was able to maintain a degree of separation between these fields. And interestingly enough, when it comes to special planning, the borough level in London is very close to the daily experience of people. In Germany, the transport and urban development function on the national and on the state and the borough level - within the same department. There is a certain degree of convergence. There is this term 'global' which everyone gets attracted to. There are also certain elements of trying to develop an idea where the city could evolve in a unique manner. Like Kolkata is identifying itself and its own future as an industrial and intellectual hub, Berlin as city of change and Johannesburg as the world class city.

The core concern here is the connection of city form and urban transport. One of the most important relationship where normally transport is what we talking about, is the question of where do people live and where do they work. Examine the population densities for London and Berlin and compare with their respective work place densities. London is a model of a city that has really this vast territory of suburban land building up to its core and therefore more economic functions. Urban economists often use so-called density gradients where we live in the city in intervals of 10 km. and plot densities. What the London transport system offers on a daily basis is this rhythm. In fact in London one was trying to contain growth within its green belt. Nevertheless, it was unable to ensure that people do not jump the green belt and we now have more than 300,000 people commuting everyday from beyond the greenbelt into greater London. This is the image of the massive urban rail system of London, that was unable to deliver a more sustainable structure of a dense urban network.

I believe visions must be grounded in reality and must take into consideration what is in place already. We need to balance ambition with flexibility. Then there is the nodal issue of integrated transport and land use planning. Transport is unarguably the biggest driver of modern urban form and we can really mess up the city if we put the wrong infrastructure in place. Fine detailing of the strategic development plan is vital. Do not define at the strategic level of the city whether someone can have a balcony or not. Urban design matters. It is the glue of the city. This responds to the software of the city. Finally the

implications for management and governance: Get the organisational infrastructure right. It is a two pronged effort: The maintenance of current governance structures through the functioning of a large, strategic body backed by political mandate. . In addition to a comprehensive transport authority, that looks into all modes of commute, from walking to cycling to public transport and private vehicles. Then cooperation and negotiation: Ensure that there is a public forum to engage communicate the visions for the future of the city and to celebrate the production of urban space. The Urban Age research gives us cues from various cities, we need to creatively reinterpret them and apply to our own cities for planned urbanisation.

B. I. Singal, Advisor, New Delhi Government

Congestion, pollution, and accidents are the main obstacles in achieving the objectives of the Mirabilis matrix. These factors themselves are rooted in efficient city transport. What I propose is a long-term solution to the problem, by controlling the transport demand itself. Transport demand management is an inherent part of the economic growth process. It comprises of two aspects: The number of trips and the distance to be travelled. If you multiply the two, you arrive at the transport demand.

The mode of travel depends on the facilities available, for example, whether pedestrian culture is facilitated through availability of sound public transport and well maintained pavements. The need to travel is a sign of a healthy city, but we can try and reduce the distance to be travelled by giving the right physical shape to the city. Through mixed land use, building of poly nuclear cities and even advocating neighbourhood schools as a lot of trips are school trips. These are some ways of regulating the distance. But the cohesive solution lies in the building of compact cities: In such an urban dwelling, distances are short and traversed easily through walking or cycling. Both of these are sustainable modes that improve the quality of life in the city through their zero fuel demand.

There are other benefits of a compact city for example, conservation of land. If you revisit some vital figures, the land availability 100 years ago was of the order of 1.26 hectares per capita. Today, it has already reduced to 0.32 hectares per capita, and 50 years hence it is projected to reduce to 0.19 hectares per capita. With reducing land availability and increasing population, the need to conserve land becomes crucial. In my mind, cities should grow along a judicious mix of lateral and vertical planes, in a compact manner.