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## Achieving sustainable development in India's rapidly growing cities

The rapid demographic growth in and around Indian cities is changing the physical dimensions – the size, shape, density, land uses, spatial structure and building types – of its cities. Increased urban development puts intense pressure on existing urban infrastructure to support quality of life. Urban growth often manifests itself as overcrowded and very high-density urban forms, claimed to contribute to crime, physical and mental illness and poor living conditions. The current physical form

that intense urban growth takes is therefore generally considered to be unsustainable.

A new research network aims to facilitate the sharing of experience, expertise and knowledge to identify arising research challenges and opportunities within the context of India's rapidly growing cities. The principal goal of the CityForm-India research network is to conduct long-term collaborative research into sustainable urban form in rapidly growing cities in India.

CityForm-India started as a dialogue between some of the key partnering institutions two years ago. In 2008 the team,

led by Oxford Brookes University and the National Institute of Urban Affairs, organized a conference in New Delhi (see page 2) to bring potential partners and stakeholders together for a day to discuss the issue of urban growth, urban form and sustainability. Following this very successful event, the interest and membership in this network has grown and this newsletter is designed to bring you up to date on the activities of the group and to continue the debate and discussions on sustainable urban form in India's rapidly growing cities. This first edition is therefore very informal: future editions will provide contributions by the network members to take the debate forward.



Prof. Mike Jenks delivering lecture on cities of tomorrow, British Council New Delhi



Photos from the 2008 conference at NIUA New Delhi

## Conference at New Delhi

On 21 August, 2008, in New Delhi, the CityForm-India: Sustainable Urban Form for Indian Cities conference was held at The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), co-organized by the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD) at Oxford Brookes University. The conference focused on the need to examine sustainable urban form in India, where cities are growing at a rapid rate. Delegates came from all over India to attend and we are very grateful to Dr. M. Ramachandran, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development who opened the conference and Mr A K Mehta (Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Govt of India) who closed the session.

Professor Emeritus Mike Jenks, keynote speaker, discussed the importance of sustainable urban form and the role of density, polycentric and connected urban development and inclusive design in the pursuit of sustainability in the urban context.

Dr Shibu Raman and Dr Nicola Dempsey presented findings from the CityForm-UK project, before delegates were invited to break out into a series of parallel sessions

how urban form - the size, shape, density, land uses and layouts of a city - can influence a range of issues: social, economic and environmental sustainability, transport use, poverty alleviation, infrastructure and urban governance. Please visit the NIUA website for more details on the event including, titles and presenters in parallel sessions (<http://www.niua.org/upcoming%20seminars/cityform/cityform.htm>).

This conference was a significant and successful event for CityForm-India network; because not only did it increase the level of membership in the network but it also gained critical support from a number of key stakeholders in urban development in India. This includes an invitation from Mr. A K Mehta, the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Govt of India, to submit a funding application to the Ministry to support some of the network activities (see page 3 for update).

At the end of the conference visiting academics from the UK give lectures at the British Council Delhi and Bombay; the Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, Chandigarh; School of Planning and Architecture New Delhi; and, CEPT University Ahmadabad. These events were well attended and many attendees expressed their interest in the network and its activities and it was a real boost to the profile of CityForm-India.

The team would like to thank the British Council and School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi for their financial and logistical support in organizing this event.

Shibu Raman and Nicola Dempsey/  
Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development

## Events

### Inaugural meeting

Date and venue to be announced

### Next steps

Inaugural meeting (New Delhi)

The inaugural meeting in India will bring as many network members as possible to plan the activities and events for the next two years.

Strategy meeting (Oxford)

Leading team members will meet in Oxford for a 2-day brainstorming session. The aim is to identify the particular urban and growth issues that are relevant to developing countries and to form working groups based on these issues.

Literature review and development of methodology

A working group will lead this extensive literature review on urban form and sustainable development with particular focus on issues in developing countries. The group will develop a comprehensive toolkit to measure, quantify and represent urban form and evaluate sustainability.

Training workshops (Delhi, Ahmadabad)

OISD, NIUA, SPA and CEPT will organize the training workshop for Masters students on state of the art methods of measuring and modeling urban form, and the use of sustainability assessment toolkit

Pilot Study

Masters students will carry out fieldwork to quantify the urban form and assess the sustainability of two selected cities using methodology developed by the team



Prof A K Sharma (Dean of SPA) with Prof Georgia Butina (Head of Planning) and other key members of School of Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University

## Updates...

### SPA and Brookes signs Memorandum of Understanding

Oxford Brookes University recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. With the growing interest in our courses and our common research on Indian cities and buildings, it is unsurprising to find informal links between many of the leading architecture and planning institutes in India and Oxford Brookes. This Memorandum of Understanding will facilitate cooperation and working together in the areas of research and teaching to consolidate the existing informal links with the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) in New Delhi. SPA is one of the leading Schools of Architecture and Planning in India. Professor A. K. Sharma, the Dean of Studies, visited Oxford Brookes University on 25th July 2008 to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and to discuss the next steps in the collaboration. He had a number of successful meetings with heads of the departments of Architecture, Planning and Real Estate and visited the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD).

### UKIERI success

The OISD and NIUA team were recently successful in securing funding for a network grant from the UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). This fund will allow the network to organize a number of the researcher exchanges between India and the UK to further strengthen the team and develop research agenda.

## MOUD Grant

Prof. Vaidya and his team at NIUA were successful in their grant application to the Ministry of Urban Development (Government of India). This fund will specifically cover the costs of a pilot study to understand the influence of urban form on sustainability within the context of India. Masters students from the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), New Delhi and CEPT University, Ahmedabad will work closely with the CityForm-India team on this pilot study.



Poster presented at UKIERI launch event

## UKIERI Award Event

Prof. Chetan Vaidya and I attended the 2008-09 Research Awards Announcement last night at the British Council. The event showcased successful UKIERI projects and collaborations. Among others, CityForm-India was represented and news of the activities planned by the network was well received. The Awards Announcement had a large audience and there were a number of presentations on lessons learnt and the way forward by previously successful collaborations.

It was great to be part of the Awards night and to see the project on which we have been working for over a year set in motion. The team here at NIUA is looking forward to a stimulating and mutually beneficial collaboration between the Indian and the UK research team.

Satmohini Ray/ NIUA/ 24 March09

## EPSRC Network Grant Application

The Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD) has submitted a network grant application to the UK's Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC). The OISD team would like to thank you all for your support in putting this application together. We are extremely grateful to Satmohini Ray and Prof. Utpal Sharma for getting all the letters of support on time for the submission, which was no mean feat!

## Announcements

### website

The CityForm-India main website is under construction but in the meantime please visit [www.city-form.org/india/index.html](http://www.city-form.org/india/index.html).

### Joining the network

Very soon a fully automated signup page on the CityForm-India main website will allow you to register your interest in the network and become a member of the network. Until then please contact Satmohini Ray ([sray@niua.org](mailto:sray@niua.org)) or Shibu Raman ([skraman@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:skraman@brookes.ac.uk)) to add your details to the database.

### UK student research travel grant

CityForm-India will be announcing fieldwork travel assistance to UK Masters students to join the Indian students for the pilot study. Watch this space! the pilot research project.

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