



a worldwide investigation
into the future of cities

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How would you define urbanism in India today?

The future of India is our cities. They produce the skills we need to develop and they are our engines of growth. They are also places of freedom, mechanisms for social engineering and it's done very easily. Our cities are breaking down the caste system, making a new India. It's a fact that cities are changing the whole third world. But we have to understand that the scale of the demand and the scale of the supply are terribly mismatched. This is the problem.

Over the centuries, there has been a strong correlation between quality of life and urbanisation.

What does this mean for people moving into India's cities?

In India's cities, quality of life in terms of the physical environment actually goes down. Our cities are overcrowded but they offer a better life for the 'have nots', the squatters that have left Indian villages. These are the landless labour, the people who have no future in their villages and come to cities to make a future for their children. Any intervention we make should increase cities' absorptive capacity.

India's cities offer an incredible amount of affluence but it is not available to all. How do you create affordable access to the city?

The scale of the growth facing the third world is immense, and we have to allow public transport to structure that growth. The city cannot grow in all directions like Delhi. The systems of public transport have to intersect and reinforce each other. Trains need to be supplemented by buses. This is the way Mumbai and London work. If we follow this strategy, people would not worry about affording a car.

What does Mumbai have to teach other cities?

Bombay is the only large city in the third world which is based on mass transport. Its linear, because it's an island. Bogotá is also linear, between the hills and the flat fields, so the city also runs up and down. But no other Indian city has public transport in its DNA. Bombay goes from the

south end where the harbour is, running along two rail lines. The stations along the first ten miles were used as suburban stations, which reinforced the demand for the trains, making it a cheaper and more efficient service sustaining a huge amount of growth. Bombay grew at alarmingly high rates from 1880 or so but surprisingly never had squatters. Subsidies on public transport thus act as an indirect subsidy on housing. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. That same principle is applied in exactly the opposite way in North America, where subsidies are applied to the motor car and highways, which ruins the landscape and our cities.

The per cent of the population living in slums in India is much greater than in Latin America, yet India's cities have much more social cohesion. How can cities reconcile extremes of inequality in developing countries?

It takes centuries to make civilisations and civilised behaviour. To be considerate of your neighbour is very deep in India. But incidents of crime are sharply increasing in India because expectations are rising.

What message can Mumbai offer São Paulo for the Urban Age South America Conference?

The goal of urban planners in the developing world should not be the City Beautiful, but rather the City as Synergy – as a network of interaction, as a place of hope. These are the qualities that São Paulo and Mumbai possess that make them so crucial to our future.