

Chapter 65

Exploring City Branding as a Tool to Conserve Urban Green Infrastructure in Developing Countries

Bhaskar Padigala

Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University, India

ABSTRACT

Cities are aggressively pushing themselves to become global destinations for economic activities resulting in various environmental stresses. The situation in developing countries such as India is not too different either. Cities are reinventing themselves to emerge as a global destination to attract talent, investment and tourism. City Branding is one such marketing strategy wherein key aspect(s) of a city (cultural, environmental, infrastructure, etc.) is used to project it as a brand, thus garnering competitive advantages and co benefits. This article, however, examines the city branding tool in a different perspective. By reviewing branding theories, concepts and case studies, this article explores the possible use of city branding strategy in conserving and promoting green infrastructure. Theoretical assessments undertaken in this article indicate that city branding has a potential to contribute positively towards cities' developmental aspirations and improving the quality of life of its citizens, leading to an environmentally sustainable urban development in India.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of “urbanization”, though varying in extent and pace between countries, has become inevitable and yet an attractive trend across the globe (Robert & Kanaley, 2006). The sheer scale of this trend can be judged from the fact that the total percentage of urbanized population in 1900 was somewhere around 14%, which at the moment, has crossed the mark of 50% (Platt et al., 1994). At a similar pace, the number of cities with population more than 1 million was 19 in 1900 and is expected to be 564 cities by the end of 2015 (Brockhoff, 2000).

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Despite being a global phenomenon, this trend of urbanization has not been uniform across geographies. In case of majority of developed nations, including those in Europe and North America, the percentage of urban population is astoundingly between 75% - 80% (Carreiro et al., 2008), whereas in case of developing countries, the transformation of rural population into urban ones is happening at a rapid pace. In the coming three decades, there is a projected addition of two-billion-plus persons in the total global accumulation, majority of which is likely to be in the urban centers of the developing world (Cohen, 2006).

The urban population in Asia-Pacific region accounts for about 44% (Montgomery, 2008), and has 13 of the biggest 25 cities in the world (Wu, 2008). But as per projections, in the coming two to three decades, developing countries encompassing nations from Africa, Latin America and Asia are slated to hold majority of urban residents in the world.

The urban population of India was no more than 25.85 million (10.84%) in 1901 representing a very small portion of the country's population, and after a century, this section of the population grew to 285.35 million (27.78%) of total population in 2001 (Singh, 2006). Factors like migration and expansion of cities contributed to almost 40% increase in the urban population in India, whereas natural growth contributed to the remaining (Sivaramakrishnan et al, 2005). In the last decade, for the first time since independence, the addition of urban population (91 million) was more than the increment in the rural population (90.5 million) (Bhagat, 2011) and this rapid trend in escalation of urban inhabitants is likely to reach 42% (550 million) of the total population by 2030 (Roberts & Kanaley, 2006).

Changing political and socio-economic aspects at both the global and national level are rapidly transforming the rural institutions and land use towards expansion of existing cities and formation of new urban centres all over the world. This fast revolution and growth of cities and its inhabitants is in turn escalating the demand for urban amenities and infrastructure like energy, housing, water supply, sewerage, road network (Pachauri, 2012; Urban Land Institute & Ernst & Young, 2013 ; Foley et al., 2005).

Today, cities and its demand for amenities and infrastructure are no longer confined to its boundaries, but are going beyond the area they occupy. Resource demands of cities influencing, utilizing and sometimes exploiting the region's resources are both biotic and abiotic. This rapid rate of resource demand and consumption has significant impacts on the region's surface cover, land use and micro environment. Despite covering only 2% of the world's geographical area, cities consume 60% of the residential water use and emit 78% of the global annual carbon dioxide (Brown, 2001). The case of India is not too different; rapidly urbanizing India is experiencing complex challenges to its ecology, economy and society (DeFries & Pandey, 2010).

Expanding cities' limits, urban population, changing land use and uneven resource allocation among inhabitants are making cities environmentally and socially more stressed. These pressures on cities' ecology and social capital are resulting in further decrease in the quality of life for the inhabitants in the city (Hinrichsen et al., 2002; Ruangrit & Sokhi 2004; Van den Berg, et al, 2007; Commoner, 1991).

According to the fifth assessment report (AR5) by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), over the period of 1880 to 2012, the average global surface temperature has witnessed an increase of 0.85°C. Furthermore, the models predict a likely rise by 1.5°C to 4.5°C in the average global land temperature by the end of the 21st century. The cumulative anthropogenic GHG emissions between the periods of 1750 to 2011 are estimated to be 555 GtC, of which major contribution is from cities (Kennedy et al., 2009; Dhakal, 2004; Hoornweg, Sugar & Gomez, 2011; Bulkeley, 2013).

Cities are not just the major contributor to, but are also among the most vulnerable to the effects of global warming (Hallegatte et al., 2011; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2007; Hunt & Watkiss 2011). Local environ-

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