

Visions of the future

[Jyotsna Nambiar](#) | August 19, 2012



In the current peak-oil situation, building sustainable cities has become a necessity. While the world wakes up to this fact, Hyderabad's cyber city area continues to grow in an unplanned manner.

Cities bring to mind squalor, crowds and congestion. Existing urban spaces may have started out as planned areas, but rapid population growth and migration has led to uncontrolled and haphazard growth of cities.

Some places, though, are reclaiming their cities. The exhibition, Post-Oil City: The History of the City's Future, presented by Institut fur Auslandbeziehungen, organised by Goethe-Zentrum, Hyderabad and curated by Anh-Linh Ngo, looks at how some cities, both upcoming and existing, are learning from the architectural plans of the past and incorporating future technology to create more sustainable cities.

A case in point is Masdar City, a project coming up in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The city, being developed at the outskirts of Abu Dhabi, is planned as a traditional walled Arab city and aims to reduce consumption of resources by using passive design strategies and advanced technology. Masdar plans to employ only renewable energy sources and will aim for a zero waste, zero carbon city.

Also interesting in the transport system in the city. No cars will be permitted inside Masdar, which will be connected to Abu Dhabi by rail. Transport within the city will be through public transport and personalised rapid transit (PRT) systems, and this traffic will be separated from pedestrian traffic.

While Masdar City is being built from scratch, existing cities are also incorporating sustainable systems into the infrastructure. Curitiba in Brazil is one such city. The place has been transformed by incorporating effective transport systems, waste management, with the active support of citizens. The city's current system is a throwback to an earlier era, where settlements sprung up around public transit systems.

The exhibition spans a variety of topics, including urban architecture, sewerage treatment, green spaces, food sufficiency and transportation. With predictions that majority of the population will live in megacities

in the future, ensuring that these urban spaces are sustainable even in a post-oil situation is the need of the day.

The exhibition runs parallel to another, Cyberabad: Landscape of Surprise. The exhibition, conceptualised and curated by Peter Gotsch and Susanne Kohte, follows the development of landscapes in Hitech City in Hyderabad.

Panoramic photographs taken in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011 are juxtaposed against one another, showing the rapid and dramatic change in the area over a period of six years.

When seen in conjunction with the Post-Oil Cities exhibition, one can only rue the fact that while the world wakes up to the need for planned and sustainable cities, Hyderabad continues to allow uncontrolled and haphazard growth of the cyber city. The photographs show the rapid reduction of green spaces and Hyderabad's characteristic rocks and an increase in the number of temporary shacks springing up to accommodate workers who construct the IT buildings. Hoardings, traffic and new constructions dot the landscape, but sustainability seems a distant dream in Hyderabad's futuristic city.

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