



Rethinking the City

OCTOBER 5, 2021 / EVENT REPORTS

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This event report is based on a webcast discussion on “Rethinking the City” by Prof Pithamber Rao Polsani. The event is organized by [the Center for Habitat, Urban and Regional Studies \(CHURS\)](#) at IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute, New Delhi.

Upcoming Events



The distinguished speaker was Prof Pithamber Rao Polsani, Faculty and Dean, School of Advanced Studies and Research, [Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design & Technology](#). Moderator was Tikender Singh Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla; Visiting Senior Fellow, IMPRI, New Delhi.

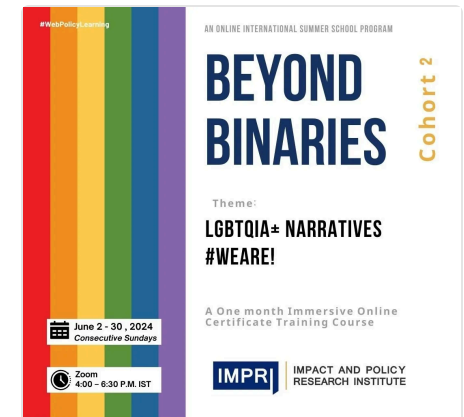
Sustainable models



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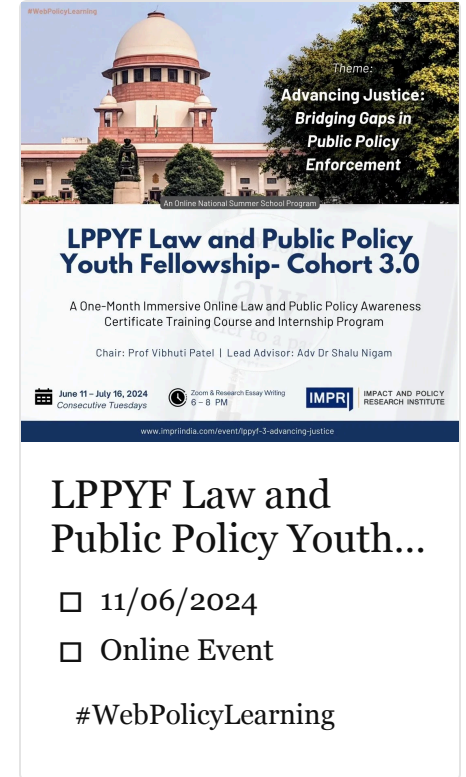


Mr. Tikender Singh Panwar initiated the discussion by providing the context on the current state of city planning in India. He emphasized the need for more sustainable models in order improved urban habitation.

What is the Need for Rethinking the City?

Prof Pithamber Rao Polsani focused on two important factors that force us to rethink the city as a construct and a space of habitat. Modern city planning emerged out in the early part of the 20th century, especially with the founding and the active participation of the congress of the international architects. The city was conceived to be the modern city, which is divided into various demarcated zones of activity. There was a total of four demarcated zones that were identified in the reports which are connected to what is called 'human activity'.

- *Firstly*, we live, so we have housing. Habitat is where people live and have their housing.



The poster features a photograph of the Indian Parliament building. The text includes the theme 'Advancing Justice: Bridging Gaps in Public Policy Enforcement', the program name 'LPPYF Law and Public Policy Youth Fellowship- Cohort 3.0', and details about the one-month immersive online course and internship program. It lists the chair as Prof Vibhuti Patel and the lead advisor as Adv Dr Shalu Nigam. The dates are June 11 - July 16, 2024, on consecutive Tuesdays, with Zoom sessions from 6-8 PM. The IMPRI logo and website are also present.

Theme: **Advancing Justice: Bridging Gaps in Public Policy Enforcement**

LPPYF Law and Public Policy Youth Fellowship- Cohort 3.0

A One-Month Immersive Online Law and Public Policy Awareness Certificate Training Course and Internship Program

Chair: Prof Vibhuti Patel | Lead Advisor: Adv Dr Shalu Nigam

June 11 - July 16, 2024
Consecutive Tuesdays

Zoom & Research Essay Writing
6 - 8 PM

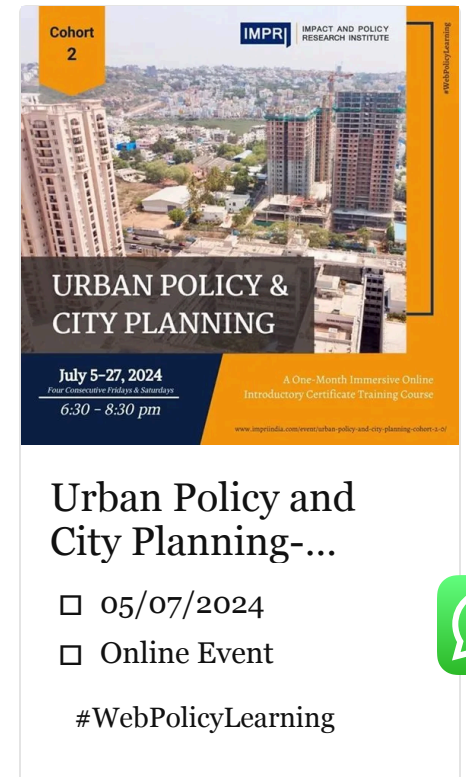
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www.imprindia.com/event/lppyf-3-advancing-justice

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The poster shows an aerial view of a city with modern high-rise buildings. It identifies 'Cohort 2' and the program 'URBAN POLICY & CITY PLANNING'. The dates are July 5-27, 2024, on four consecutive Fridays and Saturdays from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. It describes a one-month immersive online introductory certificate training course. The IMPRI logo and website are included.

Cohort 2

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- *Secondly*, we work, so there is a space for working.

As humans we require recreation, and thus we also have spaces for recreation. And transportation, that is how people move from one zone to another. Transportation is also the means and the principal objective of connecting different kinds of zones.

This idea of a city takes root very deeply from the early 20th century onwards. Many of the urban planners, in fact, the urbanism of urban planning as a self-conscious discipline emerges around this time. So, therefore, the city was looked at as infrastructure, which obviously disregarded actual inhabitants who live in the city.

The Current Effects and Challenges of Global Warming

Temperature Rise Since 1850

As the recent reports published by the United Nations along with the earlier ones that came about in the last couple of years, where they mentioned that the scientists, climatologists are re-thinking and re-evaluating their data. It is due to the precipitated downfall that is looked at in terms of the global weather and the changes in the global weather.

In a way, we can state that it is an end of a paradigm of the modern city as it was conceived in the early part of the 20th century. Global warming also brings about several dramatic consequences that are looming over the horizon and it is essential for us to re-think the concept of the city. It is because the city has become a major space for bringing together people and especially in countries like China and India.



Cities have become the place of opportunities, so there is huge pressure on the cities with regards to migration. And the cities as they were conceived, will not be able to deal with the challenges that are coming up, as a result of all these variables.

How Do We Re-think the City?

When it comes to re-thinking the city, there is no definitive answer as the world is ever-evolving. But there are some models that are available to us. In order for us to break through this paradigm of what was initially established as the modern city or a zoned city that looked at the city from purely an infrastructure perspective.

It is important that we question and re-think the philosophical, epistemological presuppositions of the modern city. Hence, there are some models that are available which looked at the pre-modern ways of thinking about it. For example, a habitation is a collective appropriation of space by a group of human beings. Although all animals and birds have a sense of habitation and territoriality, it is the human beings who are capable of self-conscious appropriation and transformation of that space. So, when the appropriation of space takes place it is symbolic of something.

In pre-modern thinking, there was an interrelationship of people with nature surrounding it. But when we purely look at it from only an infrastructure point of view, then we are excluding what actually happens in the city.



City is essentially the people who live in the metropolis along with and bodies that move across the space, as it is the bodies that labor.

These are bodies that laugh and entertain that walk, that travel the space. But the infrastructure does not take into consideration this body that moves through the space.

The infrastructure of the cities is similar to that of the 'conveyor belt'. If we observe the roads and highways in Delhi for example, they are simple like conveyor belts and then each one of the individuals who are moving through that space is simply seen as an object that needs to be moved as rapidly as possible, from one destination to another.

This same conveyor belt example can be applied to the context of human bodies navigating through the cities. In addition, the notion of the common space in which people or citizens of a city would interact is something that is not thought through. Human interaction is only looked at from a point of view of an activity. Therefore, we will have to abandon this whole paradigm of a zoned city and will have to start rethinking cities, that suffice the daily functionalities being highly efficient.



The Effects of Linear Transformation of the City and its History

In the 1920s the people who enthusiastically embraced the modern zone city planning were across the political spectrum from the Netherlands, Germany, France to the Soviet Union. In terms of the elements of the idea, it was presumed that city development was a linear progression. Although the roles of cities have now changed, the concept of linear progression does not take place in the practical sense.

Indian Cities and the Way Forward



Due to the historical context of colonialism, we have taken over the entire modern paradigm of city building in India. Each point of view is different due to the presence of a unique set of circumstances, which then develops into a unique perception. Thus, the western concept of city-building can be about because of the perceptions of western society.

As a result, this western approach might not actually be the best fit for building the cities in the Indian context. The Indian way of life should be of paramount



importance, while re-thinking and designing cities that serve the needs of the people, in a highly efficient manner. India, having its own unique culture across different geographies make it important to keep in mind the **local context** during the re-thinking process.

Acknowledgment: Dhimaan Sarkaar, (MS. Business Analytics – Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA) is a Research Intern at IMPR

Youtube link for Local Governance: Rethinking the City



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