

Roundtable Discussion on 'Resilient Cities and Transformative Adaptation'

INSEE Conference January 2016

(This panel is being organised by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements)

Cities are central to the Indian economic growth trajectory in the decades to come, and are recognised by many as current and future 'engines of economic growth'. It has been reported in the 12th FYP that the urban share in the country's economic output may have crossed 60 per cent in 2009-10. On the other hand, this growth has come at the cost of social tension over resource allocation across rural and urban residents and significant environmental degradation in urban and peri-urban areas.

At the same time, climate change has emerged as a critical challenge of this century and is posed to intensify existing inequalities. Annual mean temperature in India is projected to increase by more than 3 degrees before the end of this century. There is a growing body of literature that investigates how climate risks intersect with existing vulnerabilities in India's urban centres. Changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme events such as floods and droughts are likely to impact not only agricultural productivity and the sustainability of natural resources; but also urban infrastructure, urban economies and urban livelihoods.

Indians already grapple with multiple challenges – such as gaps in the provision of basic services, safe housing, sustainable livelihoods, deteriorating ecosystems, dysfunctional institutions and unplanned growth. Marginalised and vulnerable populations are more exposed to risks arising from climate change-related variability such as drought-induced water scarcity and food insecurity, localised floods, and extreme temperature events, as well as environmental and health risks.

IPCC AR5 (Chapter 8 Working Group II and Chapter 12 Working Group III) purports that cities can become sites of transformative adaptation by enhancing economic comparative advantage and reducing risks to enterprises and households. This round table discussion will consider the issues that constrain or enable the uptake of the 'transformation adaptation' agenda in Indian cities. The panellists have consistently worked at the interface of cities, climate change and other risks, including issues of vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

The panel includes G K Bhat (Chairman, Taru Leading Edge Pvt. Ltd.), Neha Sami (Consultant, IIHS), Partha Mukhopadhyay (Senior Fellow, CPR) and Sudhir Chella Rajan (Professor, IIT Madras), and will be facilitated by Aromar Revi (Director, IIHS).