PUNE: REDESIGNING THE CITY AND CHANGING MINDS

The exposure to outdoor air pollution causes millions of deaths each year. It's an urgent issue to address, especially in India. But what if we could tackle air pollution and climate change at the same time? This is what Pune aims to do through its goal to shift most of its residents' trips to walking, biking or public transport in the coming decade. How? By redesigning the city itself.

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PUNE, THE CITY OF 181 GARDENS

In the western state of Maharashtra, close to Mumbai, you can find the green city of Pune with its 181 public gardens. In one of these, the garden of the grand Aga Khan Palace, you can find a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi and the site where his ashes are interned. Today, Pune's inhabitants are plagued by the same air pollution that haunts many cities in India and across the planet, caused to a large extent by fossil-fueled transport. A change needs to be made, and Pune is plunging headlong into it with the impressive goal of making 80% of all residents' trips sustainable in the coming decade.

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CHANGING STREETS MEANS CHANGING MINDS

Change is already underway. In the Pune Streets Program, 100 km of streets have been identified for redesign, and the city has already developed bike lanes on 50 km of these. Fit citizens looking to mix a bit of exercise with their commute can also take advantage of the public bike sharing system, which is boosting its inventory from 8,000 to 20,000 bikes.

What else does Pune offer? The new Rainbow Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor runs 39 km and serves 120,000 people a day. Through a one-fare system travelers can go from bike to bus with one public transport card. Sounds pretty easy and pretty sustainable. In India, this is a system that even the capital New Delhi still lacks. After these changes have been done, over 60% of Pune's residents travel by public transport, bike or simply walk to their destination.

"It's not only the city itself that changes, as it is being redesigned, but also the mentality of its residents," says Mangesh Dighe, Environment Officer, Pune Municipal Corporation.

A BEACON FOR OTHERS

Pune has already received national recognition for a job well done. In 2016, the city was selected as one of 20 "Lighthouse Cities" for mobility solutions in India. But why is Pune's case so important to the country?

Last winter, the air in New Delhi was so toxic that breathing it was equal to smoking 40 cigarettes a day. And New Delhi is not an isolated example; 9 out of 10 of the world's most polluted cities are located in India, a country where pollution currently kills about one million people each year. The air quality is bad everywhere, even in the city of Pune, where it is often well above WHO limits. Around 3.6 million fossil-fueled vehicles are currently registered in Pune, which means more than one vehicle per person. But Pune is actively addressing the problem by monitoring air quality and creating an action plan that puts tackling air pollution high on the municipal agenda. Mangesh Dighe thinks his job is far from done and is looking forward to the new Metro Rail with two lines, which should be operational in three years!

Pune has started down a path that others can follow to build smart cities where people can live healthier, more sustainable lives. The city is redesigning itself to reclaim its public spaces and the health of its citizens. If Pune manages to inspire more cities to take action, this urban redesign could contribute to a more climate-safe future for all of us.

→ **Some facts about Pune:**

Pune was one of the finalists in the One Planet City Challenge in India in 2018. **WWF's One Planet City Challenge** is the largest and longest running of its kind. From 2019, participating cities will be evaluated against their alignment with the goal of 1.5°C of maximum global warming. Cities will further be guided to big win impact reductions. Want your city to sign up? Read more here: panda.org/opcc

- Pune's main target: reducing government-level emissions by 10% by 2022 compared to 2017 levels.
- Measures include promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, improving waste management and building more green spaces.
- The Comprehensive Mobility Plan goal: sustainable transport (walking, cycling, public transport) will account for about 80% of all trips by 2027.
- Main on-going project: the Pune Streets Program - 100 km in the Pune area have been identified for redesign as per the new Street Design Guidelines for the city.
- Population: current estimate is 3.4 million.
- Government type: municipal corporation (a municipal corporation to govern cities with a population of more than 1,000,000).
- The public bicycle sharing system comprises 8,000 bicycles to date with the goal of reaching 20,000.
- The city has launched an innovative multi-modal, integrated mobility plan to connect different transport modes with a one-fare system to make urban traveling a smooth experience.
- The bus rapid transit (BRT) system has brought more than 12% of its ridership from various other modes, mainly private cars.

Some inspiring quotes:

"Mass rapid transit is the most efficient way to transport large numbers of people around a city and is therefore essential for development" - Former Commissioner Kunal Kumar of the Pune Municipal Corporation.

"Streets are important public spaces that should be designed to respond to the various functions that they host, beyond being mere conduits for vehicle" - Former Commissioner Kunal Kumar of the Pune Municipal Corporation.

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