

URBAN PLANNING FOR KARACHI DURING THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD: Review, Analysis And Lessons Learnt

Editorial Board NED-JRAP

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ABSTRACT

Karachi, which is the largest urban center of Pakistan, has experienced a fast tracked physical and socio-economic development during her post independence history. To rationalize this growth and development process, several urban planning exercises were launched under the aegis of concerned civic agencies. Some of these attempts were rather elaborate exercises with a sizable capital overlay and institutional inputs. However, despite such measures, the city continues to develop and function without any reference to a proper urban plan.

This paper reviews the urban planning for Karachi that was undertaken during the Post-Independence Period (1947 to date). It analyses the various issues related to the planning process and concerns raised by the professionals and administrators associated to it. The paper concludes offering some recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Karachi is the primate city of Pakistan. Located along the shoreline of the Arabian Sea, Karachi depicts the phenomenal growth pattern which is characteristic of a typical major port city of the developing world. Established as a small local port and subsequently developed into a military base by the British, the city had a population of 14000 in 1839 and a total built up area of 35 acres, within the city walls. The city growth gained impetus after the British consolidated their activities in Sindh and Punjab and used Karachi as a major transit base for goods and military purposes.

Physical development of the city continued in a haphazard fashion soon after the occupation by

the British. Connections of upcountry provinces through railway in 1861 provided a major breakthrough in the development of tanneries, oil storage, wood processing industries and warehousing. These activities generated job attraction for the inhabitants of adjoining provinces who migrated and settled along the banks of river Lyari. By 1900 the population of the city had exceeded 100,000.

As mentioned in an official document of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC-1990), "the Bombay Town Planning Act was promulgated in 1915 and as Sindh was a part of the Bombay presidency at that time, it became applicable to Karachi. This act was primarily meant for setting up and regulating new neighbourhoods, as well as for streamlining the provision of public and community facilities. With the addition of new areas the old town transformed into a commercial and merchandising district. By 1920 the total number of dwelling units within the municipal limits was approximately 30,000" [1].

This process continued till 1947. The city grew steadily with stable trade and commerce activities which were proportionately supported by the rail and road transit networks that connected the city to the up-country. The port/ shipping facilities for transportation of raw materials and finished products also expanded. Karachi airport was one of the earliest airports in the Sub-continent to link Karachi to some of the remote regions. Besides the city possessed a responsive population that remained keen in all these developments. In 1946 the city had a population of 435,000 and was labeled as one of the best-maintained cities of South Asia.

After independence from the Colonial Rule, the

economic growth continued to accelerate amidst the rising multitudes of refugee population from India. The population multiplied 2½ folds within four years and reached to 10,50,000 in 1951. Since then the anomalous growth of the city has taken several leaps and today it has a population of over 10 million with 4.5 percent annual growth rate (Table-1).

The primacy of the city has remained. Karachi is still the hub of economic activity in Pakistan and major employment magnet of the country. It provides 25 percent of the total federal revenue and 15 percent of gross domestic product of the country. Besides, 50 percent of the country's bank deposits and 72 percent of all the issued capital is from Karachi [2]. From this account, the significance of the city in the political and economic texture of Pakistan can be empirically established.

1 - URBAN PLANNING FOR KARACHI: A REVIEW

The following have been the significant master planning attempts under-taken for the city of Karachi during the Post-Independence Period.

GREATER KARACHI PLAN: In 1951-52, a Swedish consulting firm Merz Randal Vattan was commissioned to develop a master plan for Karachi. After an intensive exercise of about three years the firm came up with a master plan, known as the Greater Karachi Plan. This plan established the growth corridors of the city and proposed an exclusive, detached district in the northern

part of the city, to be developed as the new capital. Fast mobility links were also proposed between the capital complex and the old town. Housing issue was to be resolved through the development of multi storeyed flats between the old and the new part of the city.

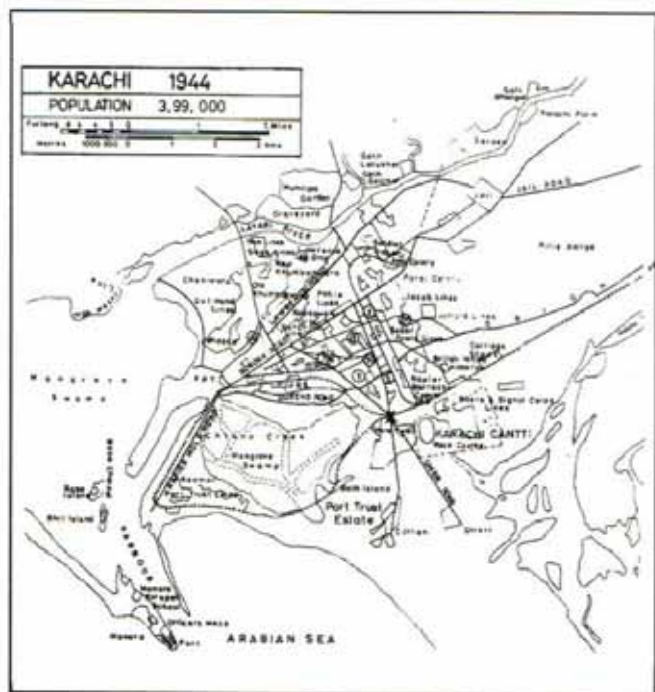
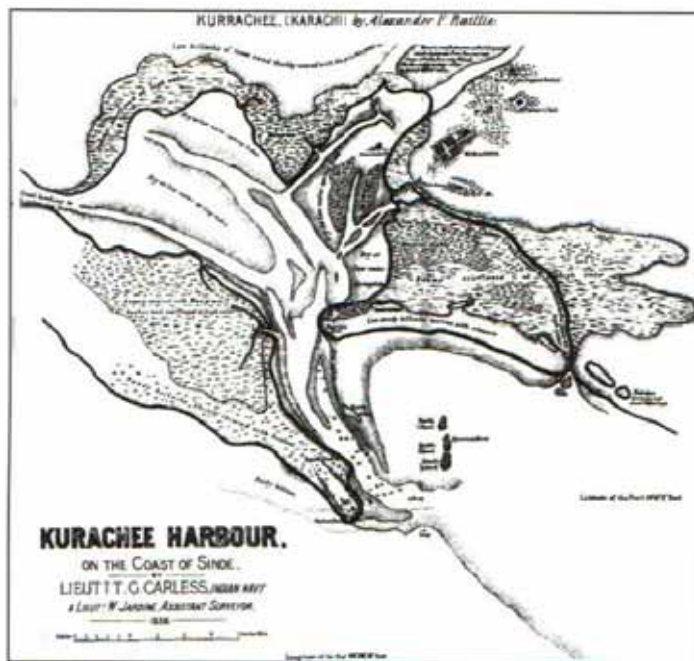
The plan could not meet its targets due to many reasons. The data base upon which the plan was founded was grossly inadequate. Besides the capital was also shifted from Karachi to Islamabad thus making the new Karachi district a redundant idea. However, the city expanded more or less along the same corridor identified in the plan.

GREATER KARACHI RESETTLEMENT PLAN: In 1956, the Government of Pakistan commissioned Doxiadis Associates of Athens to develop a resettlement strategy for refugees who were then residing in the city center. After two years the consultants came up with a proposal which was known as Greater Karachi Resettlement Plan. This plan earmarked two locations, Korangi and North Karachi to be developed into self-contained townships where the refugees could be shifted. Provision of employment opportunity through industrial and commercial development was envisioned parallel to the process of resettlement. The government was initially assigned the task of constructing displaced people colonies in these areas while incentives were provided to the private sector to invest in the industry. The plan could not achieve its targets because;

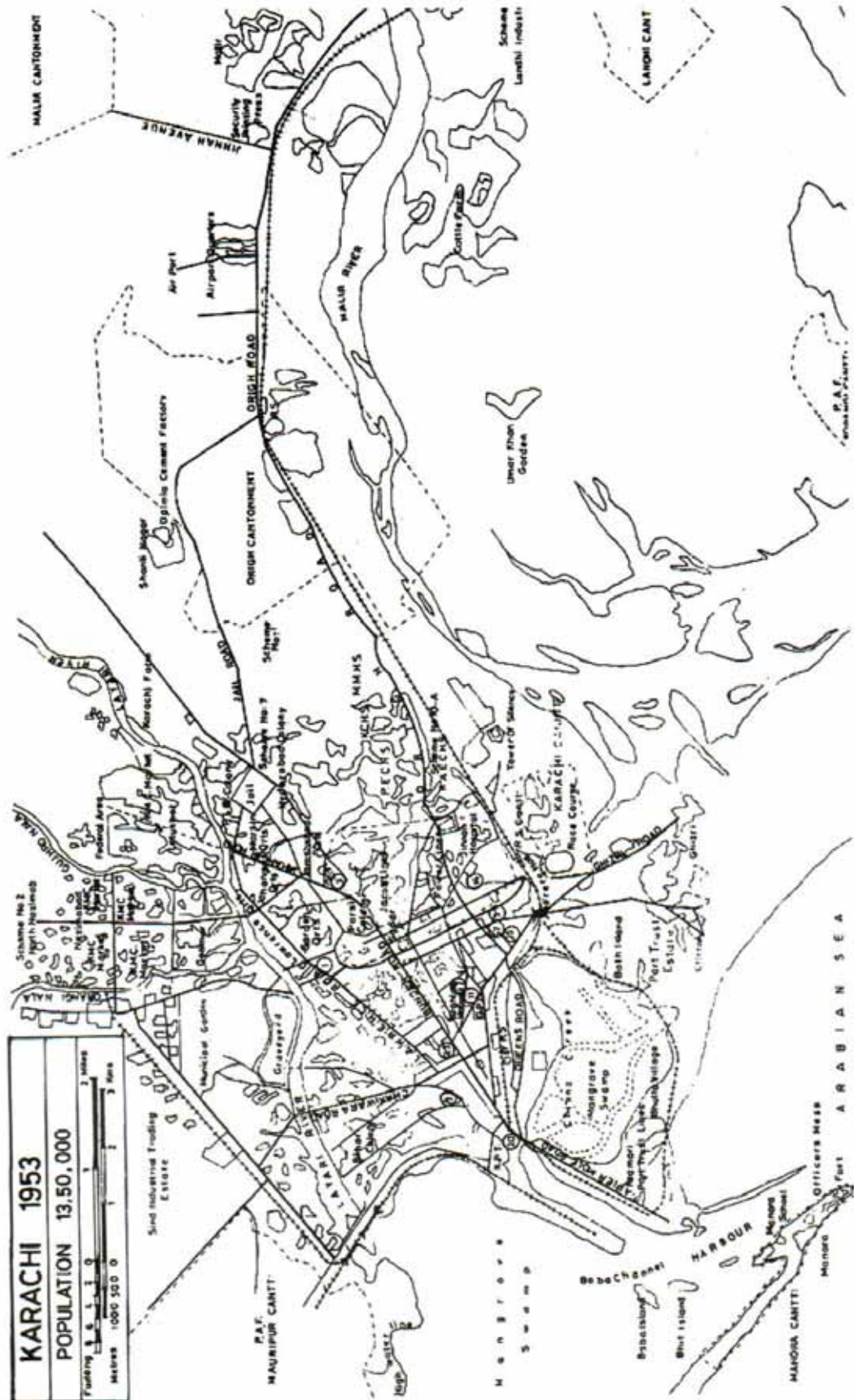
- It lacked a long term or even short-term strategy for land use management.

Year	Population	Increase/ Decrease since last Census / Survey	No. of years in between	Percent Increase/ Decrease	Per annum increase
1941	435,887	135,088	10	44.91	3.78
1951	1,068,459	632,572	10	145.12	9.38
1961	1,912,598	844,139	10	79.01	6.00
1972	3,426,310	1,513,172	11	44.16	5.15
1981	5,208,132	1,781,822	09	52.00	5.07
1998	9,269,265	4,061,133	17	77.98	3.33

Table - 1: Karachi Population Growth 1941 to date.



Map - 1: Maps of Karachi showing its growth from 1838 to 1944.



- Role of participant authority was not outlined.

- Provision of built house to the people was beyond the capacity of the government.

- Industrial and commercial development was very slow compared to the residential occupation[3].

KARACHI DEVELOPMENT PLAN (1973-85): With the technical and financial assistance of UNDP and PADCO (Planning and Development Collaborative International), the Master Plan Department of KDA¹ began the preparation of the Karachi Development Plan in 1970. The plan period covered a span of 12 years from 1973 to 1985. A comprehensive data generation exercise was conducted for the plan which provided valuable statistical backup to the project. The plan after careful analysis of the past trends, formulated specific targets at the sectoral and area level. Projection of the population, demand for housing and other facilities, land use allocations, corridors of growth and development of employment opportunities were some of the salient aspects outlined in the plan. Though the KDP 1973-85 was able to achieve certain components of its stipulations, it was not able to meet its targets in the general sense. Ambitiously the plan originated from well-intentioned objectives such as emphasis on adequate employment, basic infrastructure, food supplies, safe potable water, environmental sanitation, flood protection and basic institutional changes. However, due to an entirely limited capacity of the planning authority to persuade, communicate and enforce the stipulations of the plan, the above objectives could not be met. The plan largely believed that the state can deliver the goods but did not elaborate upon the instruments and mechanisms. For example, in one of its sectoral components, it emphasized upon housing provision to the shelterless. But the actual development shows that it was the informal sector that was providing shelter through its own mechanism across the dismal failures/ impeded public sector housing projects. The plan made references to fiscal and organizational changes but did not indicate them specifically. It addressed various

comprehensive and/ or sectoral programmes without outlining the basic role of participant actors.

KARACHI DEVELOPMENT PLAN (1986-2000): In the words of the planning document, the Karachi Development Plan 2000 was aimed at providing a framework for development to the city over the next decade and beyond. The plan is an output of a dynamic planning process development by the KDA's Master Plan and Environmental Control Department (MPECD) with assistance from the UNCHS, UNDP and a team of local and international consultants. This plan was significantly different from the 1974-85 plan (also prepared with UNDP/ UNCHS assistance), because in this case emphasis was placed on developing a planning process rather than a master plan per se. The key objectives of the plan included the following:

- To develop and implement, within the KDA, a new urban growth management tool, based on quantitative analysis and up to date computer technology aiming at presenting a synthetic image of the various urban sub-sectors, as they appear at the present time and projected into the future, and at monitoring performances and redirecting investments in these sub-sectors to meet the objectives set up by the Government.
- To create and establish mechanisms for the continuous updating, presentation and diffusion of development plans prepared by the KDA in support of small scale and large scale investment programmes such as the Karachi Special Development Programme (KSDP).
- To train the operative staff and the senior officials of the KDA in the implementation of the above new methodologies and approaches, including the mastering of the appropriate hardware and software where applicable.

The outputs of the Project according to the Project Document were:

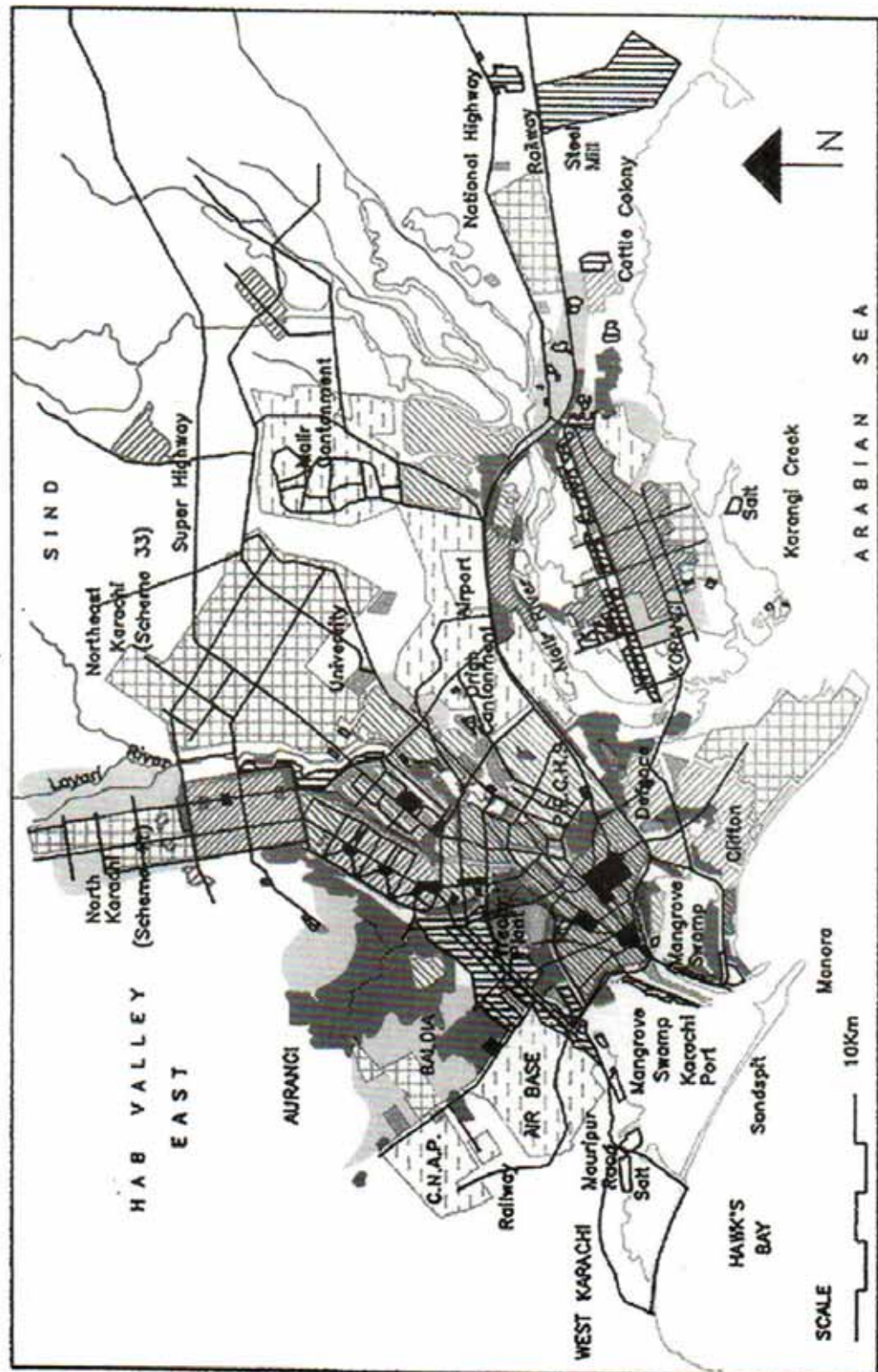
- A comprehensive computerized urban and regional data base including mechanisms for its

¹ Karachi Development Authority has become defunct and merged in City District Government of Karachi in 2002.

KARACHI - HOUSING TYPOLOGY AND LAND USE

- Developed after 1988
- A (Katchhi Abad)
- B (Semi Pucca)
- C1 (Pucca & Semi-Pucca)
- C2+ (Pucca)
- Squatter Settlement
- High Density
- Small Plot
- Medium Plot Size
- Large Plot Size
- E (Apartment)
- Commercials
- Industries
- Developed land
- Services/Util. Government/Instl.
- Defense
- Agriculture

Map derived from "SPOT" satellite image of Jan. 1987 and aerial photographs from Oct. 1988



Source: 1. Bertaud, Marie-Agnes (1989) *The Use of Satellite Images for Urban Planning - Case study: Karachi, PAKISTAN* 2. Hasan, Arif

maintenance and updating, by MPECD staff.

- A fully tested and documented mathematical model linking together the parameters of the database created, including an established set of consumption and performance indicators associated to the long range objectives of the Government.
- A detailed urban development scenario for 1986-1991 and 2000 using the data base and the model to simulate the effects on the consumption and welfare of the urban population of a number of a demographic, financial, legal, socio-economic and planning factors.
- The first issue of "Karachi Development Plan" includes a set of maps illustrating the spatial implications of the development scenario showing the projected geographical distribution of the population by socio-economic group, the projected land use, the projected utilities, and community services and transportation networks.
- A series of selected sub-sector studies in areas where the database is weak.
- An operational digital based mapping system within the KDA to replace the current analog mapping system.
- Trained professionals in up-to-date approach to urban planning based on computer technology[4].

The plan could not become a legal entity. It remained an academic exercise. According to an evaluation mission, there were several shortcomings inbuilt in this planning process. One, its technical framework could not be fed with appropriate and reliable database. Two, it did not account for the socio-political realities. Three, the Master Plan and Environmental Control Department (MPECD) of KDA was not strengthened to undertake the emerging responsibilities. And four, no political support existed for the plan. One may conclude that the process of planning continued without learning from the past experiences.

From the review of the above-cited background of the planning process in Karachi, several issues

arise. Foremost among them is the fact that in the past and prevailing situation, the planning authority was not the financing agency of the proposed programmes. Nor it had any legal or administrative leverage to influence the public sector departments or agencies to follow its prescribed planning guidelines.

For example, while defining growth control mechanisms, the MPECD – KDA (which made the past two most important city plans), could not influence Defence Housing Authority or the cantonment boards to restrict the density provisions. Similarly, it could not implement its guidelines on the port authorities to develop links of their ware houses through the rail roads, to control the haywire freight traffic. At best it only offered sweet and polite advices to the concerned departments and authorities which responded at their own convenience and seldom acted accordingly [5].

Similarly the planning process did not recognize the clandestine political resistance that existed for the prescriptions of a development plan.

RECENT ATTEMPTS: The KDP-2000 suggested the creation of a Karachi Division Physical Planning Agency (KDPPA). The creation of this agency remained in cold storage for several years. In 1999, the then Governor of Sindh constituted a committee to help create a planning agency for Karachi. This committee, which comprised urban planners, academics, researchers and city administrators, who voluntarily worked for several months on the subject before presenting its report. However, its recommendations were never considered.

After the enforcement of Sindh Local Government Ordinance 2001, new planning structure was notified in December 2001. At the city level, a City Agency for Master Planning (CAMP) was suggested as an umbrella setup to ensure the enforcement of city master plan. The same pattern was to be repeated at the town level. In follow up of this notification no action is initiated till now.

3 - LESSONS LEARNT

- **ABSENCE OF A LOGICAL PLANNING**

PROCESS: Formulation of a Master Plan of Development for a mega-city like Karachi involves a study of the current situation, cognition of growth trends, careful assessment of future requirements, etc. The process includes surveys of housing conditions, land use patterns, socio-economic conditions, jurisdictional topography, distribution of responsibilities, fiscal management and an inquiry into the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions. The review of Codes, Acts and Ordinances, concerning urban development, their consolidation, framing of new legal instruments for regular updating of data-base, monitoring the implementation organizational cooperation, linking of planning decisions with investment decisions and budgeting procedure of other agencies is an essential part of the planning process. Master Planning is therefore, not a one-time assignment, it is a continuous process. This fundamental structure of planning was never applied.

- **LACK OF EVALUATION OF PREVIOUS PLANS/ PLANNING ATTEMPTS:** It has remained a common practice in planning to start afresh. Each time the previous plan was merely consulted for a passing reference. Never was an evaluation conducted to review the performance of any plan made in the past. The only exception was for KDP 1986-2000 but this evaluation was not adopted by the planning agency for any improvement in the plan.
- **INCAPABILITY OF THE PLANNING AUTHORITIES TO EXECUTE THE PLAN:** All the plans of Karachi had been made under the auspices of (now defunct) KDA which did not possess any legal or administrative control on the nineteen other land development agencies of the city. Thus the capacity of KDA to execute the plans was grossly constrained.
- **ABSENCE OF POLITICAL MANDATE FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS:** The planning process was reduced to a mere residual type exercise which was only conducted under the directions of the donors or the UN agencies. It never enjoyed the political mandate of any regime who traditionally wanted to keep their options open for any adhoc adjustment in the metropolitan functioning. The Steering Committee that was set

in the KDP 2000 and chaired by the Chief Minister of Sindh never met in the past five or more years to legally adopt the plan.

- **TECHNICAL LACKINGS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS:** The planning process, which was always organized in the most traditional pattern, was faulty and inadequate. The basis of the assumptions was drawn from sample surveys in the absence of comprehensive views on realities. This led to under/ over estimations. Physical data was obsolete and never upgraded. Karachi, even today, does not have a comprehensive mapping base that is otherwise required for all kinds of planning and development exercises. Data gathered by the Defence institutions is not in the public access. The property ownership records or the alignment of jurisdictions are simply inappropriate and obsolete.
- **PLANNING AUTHORITY IS NOT THE FINANCING AGENCY OF THE EXERCISE:** In the KDP-2000, the KDA has suggested various options of investments or the concerned institutions that are entirely autonomous in their conduct. Thus it is impossible for the planning agency to execute the various components according to the outlined framework.
- **NON-EXISTENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INTEREST GROUPS:** It is interesting to note that those groups who actually decide about the fate of the city were not invited to the policy or plan making tables neither during the KDP-1973-85 nor KDP-2000. Transporters, shopkeepers, estate agents, brokers, dealers, religious and political groups, professionals, builders and businessmen remained aloof throughout the process. Nor were the groups of localities from general public invited to contribute their ideas in the planning process.
- **INCONGRUENT INSTITUTIONAL HIERARCHY:** In the past and present setup, the metropolitan level institutions have always remained an outreach of the provincial and federal government. The control of the municipal affairs directly rests with the provisional and federal bureaucracy. In the absence of an effective local government, it is difficult to imagine any urban planning to go beyond a more academic level.

4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

- Concept of planning must change. In theoretical terms the comprehensive should be replaced by planning support system around commonly identified issues. The localities, their communities or the localized agencies, whether governmental or non governmental must be empowered to undertake planning process at their own ends. The relative success of illegal land sub-dividers over the years in different fringe localities and the subsequent decline in the metropolitan development agencies, to deliver land, are the two contrasting performances in the same respect.

- Planning for Karachi can simply not materialize in the absence of an autonomous planning agency. Such an agency must be created with sufficient independence to draw its own working agenda, time frame and human resources.

- A common agenda must be developed after seeing candid opinions and aspirations of the actors concerned. Though it may be an uphill task to create a common consensus ground, yet unabated efforts must continue to evolve around a common rationale of urban development at the metropolitan and the locality scale.

- Prioritization of plans/ projects/ programmes must be initiated with the involvement of interest groups. It is a common practice that development projects are visualized, sanctioned and initiated without establishing their priority in the overall

functioning, thus it leads to alienation of masses and the redundancy of the projects themselves. This must be avoided.

- Unabated build-up of information should be initiated. It will be a commendable task on the part of proposed planning agency to revive their capacity of information collection, analysis, storage and concurrent dissemination. Efficient processes like the use of Geographic/Land Information System, etc. will be beneficial in such practices. The availability of information about hidden facts and figures can only lead to transparency in planning and development.

- Efforts must be made to reinforce the technical, managerial and financial capacity of the existing institutions. The creation of new institutions will multiply the confusion and disorder.

- Projects/ plans/ programmes should be finalized after public opinion is duly sought. It is not a civilized manner to decide about the people's destiny through any plan or project without taking them into confidence.

In sum, the fundamental pre-requisite to a viable urban planning process is the political mandate and administrative will to undertake it. The technical and managerial aspects simply conform to a vision that is articulated by the decision makers about the city. Unless they do not voluntarily surrender their authority of arbitrariness and adhocism, no appropriate change in the urban development scene can be expected ■

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The Editorial Board wishes to acknowledge the interview of Mr. Islamuddin Siddiqui, former Director, MPECP-KDA by Ms Masooma Mohib, who also prepared a transcript of the same.