Aim

It is an established fact that a turn towards sustainable practices is essential for the survival of our planet.

The intention of my travel research project is to produce an evocative resource that will inspire, and, to an extent, enable those, who engage with it, to adopt sustainable practices.

The world is urbanizing rapidly. Therefore, sustainable urban development goes a long way in determining the overall sustainability of our planet. Public transport is an essential element of a city and has a direct bearing on physicality of urban form, quality of urban life, the use of resources, density of settlements, and so on. Public transport is of various forms. I intend to study examples of public transport around the world, which are innovative, are a form of sustainable practice, are equitable, and transcend utilitarian needs to become beautiful cultural symbols. Equally important will be the study of role these methods of transport in shaping urban form, bettering the quality of urban life, efficient use of resources, determining the density of settlements, and entailing a sustainable humane habitat.

Engagement

The method of engaging with the city for my research will be holistic, broadly being seen from three perspectives: First: the city in motion. Second: the city containing motion. Third: the city as sustainable humane habitat. All perspectives will finally be put together to understand how practices of public transport are shaping sustainable humane habitats. Some other methods of enquiry will be interviews, statistical analysis, enquiry into political economy, and so on.

I will be traveling for 3 months from June to September, 2008. I will be visiting 9 cities across 3 continents. I have selected a variety of cities: big and small, from east and west, north and south, first world and third world, white and brown.

Places

The cities that I propose to study, in chronological order, are:

1 _| Moscow (Russia): This city has the most reliable metro system and the most beautiful metro stations. Also, there is a phenomenon of any-car-a-cab, where any car can be hailed as a cab, by paying the driver for gas.

2, 3, 4 & 5_| Copenhagen (Denmark) -> Amsterdam (The Netherlands) -> Barcelona (Spain) -> London (UK): Europeans have realized that walking and cycling are the only sustainable means of transport. Copenhagen has been a pioneer city in recognising the social value of pedestrian streets, with its main street, Strøget, pedestrianised in 1962, and the process gaining more ground each year. Amsterdam is the European city with the most elaborate bicycle network, complementing the road and canal systems. In cities like Copenhagen & Amsterdam, 35% of all transport needs are satisfied by bicycle (Rautsi 1993). The city of Barcelona, apart from having a metro, two separate tram networks, a bus network, introduced the Bicing service, which promotes a culture of bicycling. It is similar to the system in Copenhagen, where the city provides bicycles that can be found throughout the downtown area; they can be used with a returnable deposit of 20 kroner. Las Ramblas, in Barcelona is a sequence of 3 pedestrian oriented boulevards that also accommodate 4 lanes of traffic. The arrangement succeeds because people on foot have precedence: Cars must accommodate pedestrians.

These are world-renowned examples of people centric, low-carbon cities. These cities are showing the world that an alternate 'culture' of transport is possible – it is not low to walk or cycle - it makes the city experience enjoyable!

6, 7 & 8 _| Bogota (Colombia) -> Curitiba (Brazil) -> Santiago (Chile): These are cities from developing nations, which have proved that even developing nations (with ever expanding cities) can have quality urban environments - something that a country like India need learn from urgently. They have master-planned public transport, with the implementation of the famous Curitiban Bus Rapid Transit model that has now been implemented around the world (in Bogota, Los Angeles, Guayaquit, Pune and many more cities). Curitiba was named the most innovative city in the world at UN-Habitat. Bogota organizes cyclivio – a festival on Sundays where around 70Km of roads are closed for automobiles, and are flocked by cyclists, pedestrians, and people on skates. Santiago introduced the metro, which has made commuting easy and enjoyable. One doesn't see any parked cars on La Avenida Providencia in Santiago, because they're all underground. In their place are commodious sidewalks perfect for strolling with seating aplenty. El Paseo Ahumada is a unique way of pedestrian located in the center of Santiago. It is considered the most active street reference and commercial center of the city.

9 _| Old & New Delhi (India): New Delhi is the capital city of India. Situated within the metropolis of Delhi, New Delhi was planned by Edwin Lutyens, a leading 20th century British architect. New Delhi was laid out to the south of the Old City that was constructed by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. India is changing rapidly, and so is Delhi. Transport used to be a major problem in Delhi - overcrowded buses, taxis, and rickshaws were the only means of public transport. The Delhi Mass Rapid Transit System; a world-class metro service, has been instituted in New Delhi and in the rest of the metropolis. Commuters have breathed a sigh of relief. Chandini chowk is a famous market in old Delhi, which was intended to be pedestrian. However, in the present day, a conflict can be seen here between the pedestrian, cyclist, and the automobile owner.

All cities in the world can learn something or the other from these cities about sustainable humane habitats. I will be spending approximately 9-10 days in each city. I will be trying to fix up prior appointments with architects, planners, educators, and other resource-persons, in cities that I visit. Interviews and discussion with them will inform my research and form part of the research resource document.

Method

I am passionate about writing, photography, and pedestrian exploration of cities and landscapes: I am one of Berkeley Prize 2008 semi-finalists, and have done amateur photography across rural and urban India (most often on foot). I will be using writing, photography, and videography, to produce a written travelogue, a photo-essay, and a short film to record and express my travel and research.

In trying to comprehend the reason why one has to travel, I found inspiration in Michel de Montaigne, the great Renaissance writer. He said, "Traveling through the world produces a marvelous clarity in the judgment of men. We are all of us confined and enclosed within ourselves, and see no farther than the end of our nose. This great world is a mirror where we must see ourselves in order to know ourselves. There are so many different tempers, so many different points of view, judgments, opinions, laws and customs to teach us to judge wisely on our own, and to teach our judgment to recognize its imperfection and natural weakness."

Postscript

Tata Motors, a major Indian auto manufacturer, surprised the world on 10th January 2008, by launching the Rs.1 lakh (US$ 2500) small car: Nano. It is supposed to be a car for the masses. It will sure amass the roads. This has sparked a race amongst auto manufacturers to produce cheap cars. People are being led to believe in the car-centric model of transport. I, as a resident of a developing third-world country, am deeply concerned with the choices being made in my country as regards development. I think this study would enable me to educate myself, fellow students, city-building professionals, and fellow countrywomen and men, about making better choices and building sustainable humane habitats. I will be presenting the research outcome, in a suitable format at the 11th International Conference on Humane Habitat 2009, at Rizvi College of Architecture, Mumbai - my school.
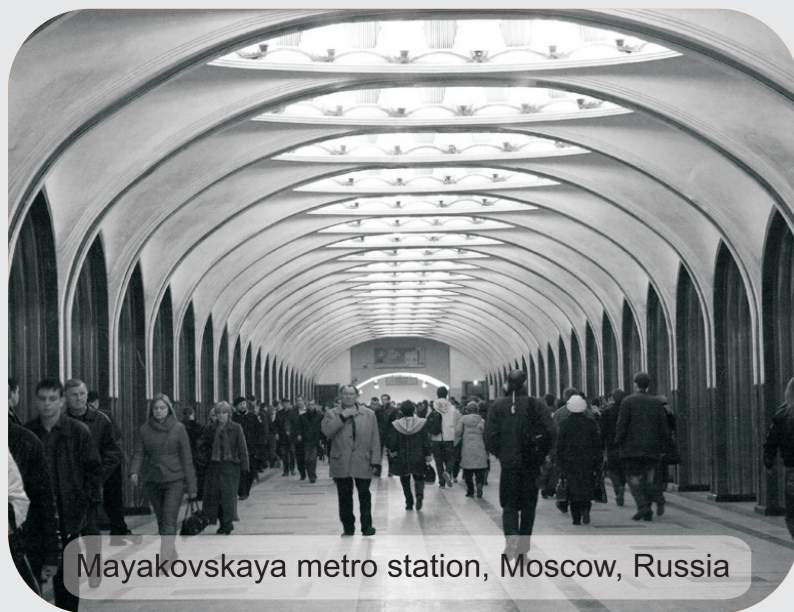
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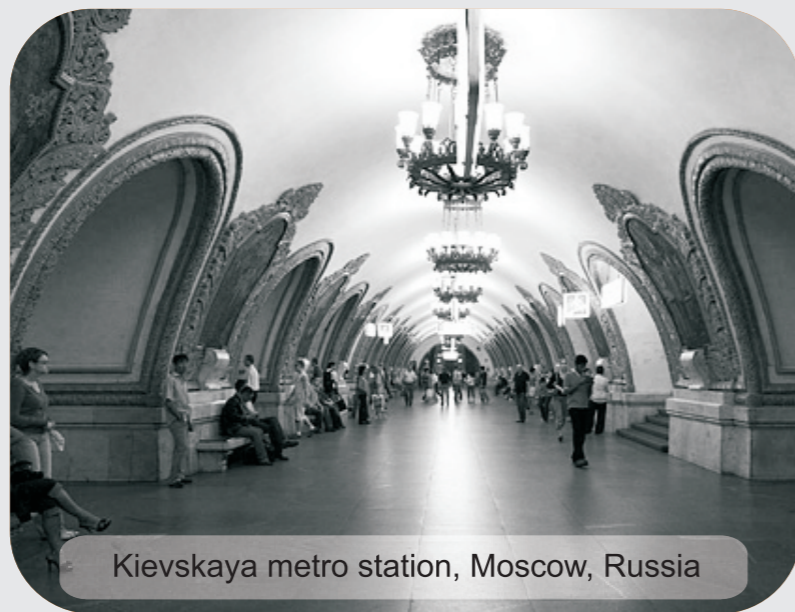
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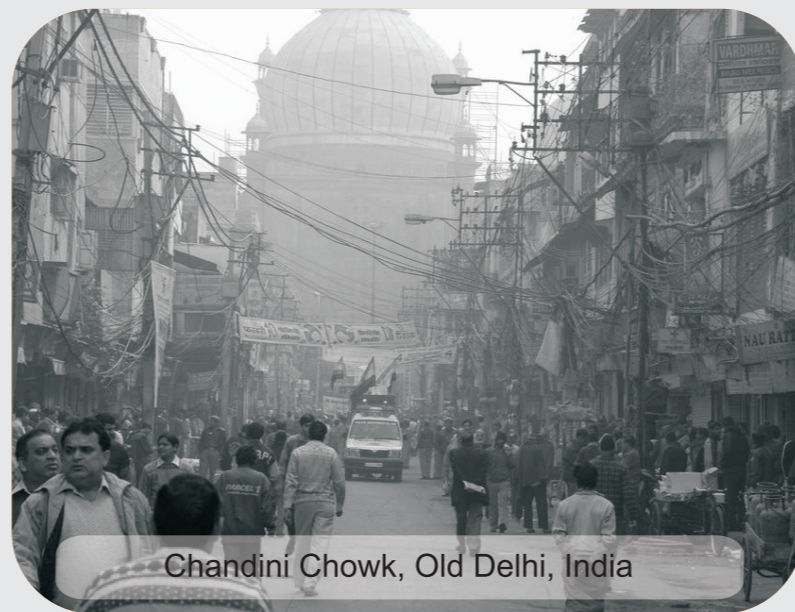
Chandini Chowk, Old Delhi, India

Gold Museum station,Bogota, Colombia

November 15 Street Curitiba, Brazil

Nyhavn, CopenHagen, Denmark

Role of Public Transport in shaping Sustainable Humane Habitats: case studies across 3 continents
Faizan Jawed, Rizvi College of Architecture, Mumbai, India year 5

Nieuw Markt, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Dedicated Bus Lane, Curitiba, Brazil

Strøget, Copenhagen, Denmark

New Metro Station,Santiago, Chile

Bus Stop, Curitiba, Brazil

Bicing station, Barcelona, Spain

Las Ramblas, Barcelona, Spain

Tram Station, Barcelona, Spain

Millennium Bridge, London, UK

Central London, UK