



# Auroville Outreach

A newsletter from Auroville Universal Township

Special issue - September 2002

## Conclusions of the City Networking project



European Commission



Asia Urbs Programme



Auroville Universal Township



City of Paris



Province of Treviso



City of Venice

The project of 'City Networking for Sustainable Development and Human Unity' approved by the European Commission under the Asia Urbs programme, has heralded and facilitated the beginning of many new partnerships, new relationships and new experiences between Indian and European cities, thus bringing peoples of the world closer together.

Generously funded by the European Commission, the project has been coordinated from Auroville by 'Auroville's Future', the Centre for Urban Research, in partnership with the cities of Venice, Paris and Treviso. It was initiated in October 2001, and was brought to a successful conclusion at the end of September this year.

The scope of the project was to provide a base and opportunities for sharing the experience of best practices in the fields of sustainable urban management and cultural human integration with cities interested in decentralized cooperation. Conferences, roving exhibitions in India and Europe, the creation of a database of Indian and European cities, websites, publications, newsletters and press conferences have all formed part of the many activities undertaken within the framework of the project. As a result, there has been a noticeable increase in the interaction between Indian and European city managers and city organisations stemming from the project.

The role that Auroville has been playing in these new 'city-networking' efforts could be summarized as:

- Acting as a resource centre providing information on Indian cities to European contacts.
  - Functioning as a meeting place - a node for the networks.
  - Acting as a think tank, an R&D centre for Innovative Urban Management.
  - Operating as a field experiment for Innovative Urban Management in practice.
- Providing ongoing support for Asian cities wanting to engage in Innovative Urban Management or partnerships with EU cities.



*Exhibition Hall in Venice, with Auroville's galaxy plan in foreground (see following pages)*

## Recent events

The informative roving exhibitions - also referred to as the 'Expositions of Best Urban Development Practices' - have included in their itinerary six venues; three in the Indian cities of New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, and three in the partner cities of Venice, Paris and Treviso.

The Treviso exhibition was held at the historic and important Palazzo del Trecento from 24th to 30th of June 2002. Organised by the district administration of Treviso (Provincia di Treviso) and commendably coordinated by Dr. Uberto Di Remigio, Director of International Relations at the Provincia, the well-publicized inauguration was followed by a press conference. Specially appreciated was the promise and support of Mr. Fluvio Pettena, the President of Provincia di Treviso, for an enduring relationship with Auroville. Also laudable was Treviso's support for the concept of human unity, considering the complex immigration problems that they are presently facing. The exhibition included the remarkable developmental efforts made by Treviso in a number of South American and Asian cities.

From Treviso the exhibition then moved on to Paris (July 4th -13th), at the Maison de l'Inde, Cite Universitaire. It was inaugurated by Mr. Philippe Billot, Chief of APUR (Atelier Parisien D'Urbanisme), partner in this project, and benefitted from the enthusiastic local support of the 'Auroville International France' association. Of special interest were posters incorporating early photographs of Auroville made by French Aurovilian photographer Dominique Darr, which were displayed alongside and gave the exhibition an added historical dimension.

In Venice, the event ran concurrently with another exhibition on Auroville's activities, being part of the first project implemented

under the Asia Urbs programme, displayed at the reputed Foundation Querini Stampalia. The main city-networking exhibition took off at Venice-Mestre area (July 19th-28th) in the prestigious civic centre, the Candiani. The municipality of Venice expressed their full support for Auroville and all its ideals. Specially interesting were the parallels drawn between the two cities by Roberto D'Agostino, the Deputy Mayor for International Relations, European Affairs and Strategic Planning of Venice Municipality. He highlighted the fact that the two cities are acting as time-and-space bridges between the East and the West, one being the ideal city of the past, located in the West, the other the ideal city of the future, located in the East.

The Mumbai exhibition and workshop, held from 14th to 21st September, were the last and best publicised events. In collaboration with the 'Indian Architect & Builder' magazine, the exhibition was presented at the most ancient and prestigious College of Architecture of Mumbai, the J.J. College of Arts and Architecture. It was very successful in evoking interest among teachers and students alike, as well as among organisations related to the project theme, who are particularly eager to contribute to the city-networking resource centre. 'Clean Air Island', an organisation

based at Mumbai, which is holding another Asia Urbs project, was invited to present a panel with their activities and gave a presentation during the workshop.

The workshop, the most eagerly awaited event of the week, took place on the 21st of September. The theme was "Civil society inputs in planning methods of Metropolitan Mumbai". A panel of around twenty architects, planners, NGOs and other urban participants shared together an exciting and productive morning, discussing possible ways of constructive networking for the improvement of Mumbai urban conditions.



*Entrance to Mumbai exhibition*



# Treviso



# Paris





# Venice



# Mumbai





## A year full of activities

For the implementation of this 'city-networking' project, Auroville's Future established a Secretariat, which successfully coordinated all the planned activities. This Secretariat has been steadily enlarging its activities, and has been quite dynamic in actively promoting practical city networking between European and Asian cities & organisations since its inception.

The international conference and the roving exhibitions, which 'Auroville Outreach' has covered extensively in previous issues, have highlighted Auroville as a platform for information sharing, contact making and partnerships between European and Indian cities. Along with the joy of hosting international events, it has also brought to Auroville new friendships and has opened new perspectives for the future.

A website, [www.asiaurbscitynetworking.org](http://www.asiaurbscitynetworking.org), has been established, which includes a database of 200 Indian and 200 European cities as an information and consultation tool for all parties interested in city networking. The website is meant to be instrumental in establishing, strengthening and spreading the base for information sharing, and in fostering partnership possibilities between Europe and Asia. It is also a nodal point for further contacts and twinning ventures between the various stakeholders involved.

A book, with 150 Indian and European city profiles, offering a picture of urban conditions and key issues relating to the different cities, has been published and widely distributed in Europe and India. This book is now acting as a practical guide for city networking.

Although not directly resulting from the project, there have been a number of other activities generated thanks to the countless contacts made and new interactions established, some examples being:

- Lalit Kishor Bhati, Urban Planner from Auroville's Future, represented Auroville and received very enthusiastic feedback at the 'Fifth International Eco-city Conference' in Shenzhen, China from 19th to 23rd August 2002.
- 'Urban Environmental Information Systems', a 2-day workshop sponsored by Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi, was organised by Auroville's Future and hosted on the 4th & 5th September in Auroville. 34 city managers and chief executives from different State Pollution Control Boards all over India participated.

## What next?

The experiences of this year and the recognition received have encouraged Auroville's Future to proceed deeper and more broadly into the city networking field. The result is that the Auroville-based 'City Networking Secretariat' will be continuing to operate with increased emphasis in the following areas:

- As a resource centre for Indian and European cities, providing information on each other's capacities and potentialities, together with whatever needs for improvement have been identified. Brochures, books, CDs and other visual communication materials will be used for this purpose.
- Maintaining the Web page as an interactive facility.
- Regular updating, enlargement and distribution of the databases of Indian and European cities.
- New projects for the successful promotion of city networking will be presented for funding to a number of international funding agencies and government institutions. It has become evident that 'capacity building for city networking' is the number one priority now, and therefore a variety of interesting projects are being prepared towards the realisation of that objective.
- Visiting cities in Europe and India and establishing and strengthening contacts everywhere. Much emphasis will be placed on this distinctive activity.

The Auroville team connected with the Asia Urbs project are inviting all people concerned with the improvement of the urban scenario, and specially those interested in connecting with other cities all over the world, to join and link up with this city-network so that one day it can become the **network of the networks**, including every city in every country in an effort towards a concrete and ultimate realisation of an actual human unity in diversity.

# CITY NETWORKING

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN UNITY

SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION UNDER ASIA URBS PROGRAMME



IMPLEMENTED BY AUROVILLE  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

: CITY OF PARIS

: CITY OF VENICE

: PROVINCE OF TREVISO



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