

Learning from the utopian city



GEOGRAPHY

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Varanasi at dusk by Rohit Madan

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Conceptualising the Indian city

Ayona Datta, Anu Sabhlok, William Gould and Rebecca Madgin

Indian cities are now more at the centre of debates on urban utopias than ever before. Whether for their entrepreneurial spirit, modernist planning, contested heritage claims, or 'smart' visions, the Indian city has time and again narrated the story of India's postcolonial coming of age. The future of the Indian city is shaped by its own history – where utopian visions of urban planning are continually reassembled by grassroots articulations of urban citizenship. Each of these grassroots imaginations of citizenship can be seen as a vision for a new alternative utopia. This international network brought together scholars, policy makers, planners and civil society members from India and the UK to explore alternative histories of the utopian city in India.

Alternative utopias

The history of urban planning is a history of urban utopias. Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City, Le Corbusier's Radiant City and Richard

Register's Eco-City all provide fertile ground for examining both the imageries, visions and realities of modernist urban planning and the uncritical flow of urban theory and praxis from the global north to south. In the global south, Chandigarh and Brasilia are often cited as the result of these totalitarian visions that overlooked local contexts and produced failed utopias. Yet if anything the recent post utopian turn towards a global urban age recasts the historical, cultural, and political legacy of urban utopias in the rhetoric of crises around urbanisation, migration and climate change. Utopian urban planning is still discursively, visually and materially sustained through tropes of heritage cities, eco cities, smart cities and other politically driven experiments with technology in the global north and south.

Grassroots imaginations of urban futures are often silenced as illegal, illegitimate, dissenting and anti-developmental. Yet at the same time, they can radically transform the



rationalist planning visions that are often out of sync with everyday life at street level. Grassroots visions of urban futures are not necessarily against the city – they have different visions of urban utopias based on citizenship rights, justice and democracy. These visions are shaped by their historic, social and political engagement with city spaces and urban environments. We call these ‘alternative utopias’. We argue that these alternative utopias are key to the planning of future cities in India, at a time when it stands poised towards a radical shift to smart urbanism.

Taking four contrasting cities – Varanasi, Chandigarh, Navi Mumbai and Nashik – this project explored how alternative utopias to top-down planning visions are envisioned at the grassroots. The objectives of the project were achieved through a series of inter-connected city workshops between scholars, policy makers, planners

and grassroots organisations. We brought the ideas of utopian histories in conversation with smart urban futures while at the same time remaining grounded on the stakeholder experiences of living and working in the city. The workshops utilised a range of dynamic methods including oral histories, photographs, sketches, music, dance, and mental maps to elucidate a range of parallel histories and futures. There are not too many forums where academics, policy makers and grassroots organisations discuss and debate urban issues. Our workshops provided that forum and the networks developed have paved the way for further collaborative ethnographic work in these cities.

The project culminated with a project conference titled ‘Utopian Urban Futures: Histories, imaginations, possibilities’. The conference was organised at Leeds from 27–28 June 2016.



(Un)framing utopias in the urban

Photographic ideas in and of the urban,
curated by Jitesh Malik and Rohit Madan

The ‘blueprint cities’ of architects like Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier have received substantial attention by urban researchers, architects, planners and governments. What remains less visible are the imaginations, perceptions and utopian visions of those that inhabit city spaces – as residents, migrants, children, tourists, non-human lives...

We put out an open call for photography exploring these themes, and have featured a selection of the photographs we received throughout the pages of this report. In these images we touch upon that liminal space that lies between the abstract and lived. They capture the dialectic between form and process, between built space and lived experience: to examine the histories, imaginations and possibilities of alternative urban utopias. How do the aspirations and dreams of urban residents materialise in space or in what ways do they sneak out amidst the cacophony of bureaucratic, professional and administrative interpretations of space? How does urban space speak to you – revealing your inner imaginations and visions of the city and its experience? What can visual interpretations of the Utopian city unveil that might remain concealed within the written discourse?



Unheard narrator by Shilpa Dahake

The overlapping layers of painted advertisements and graffiti on the wall and garbage in the front, represents the way it is imagined or (re)produced socially by people who intentionally or unintentionally come in contact with its surface. Uneven, forgotten and ignored such surfaces of walls in cities become a canvas for many of its inhabitants’ expressions.

Four alternative utopias

Varanasi: smart heritage city

William Gould, University of Leeds

The fame of Varanasi or Banaras as an ancient metropolis, in many ways, overpowers its mundane urban histories. Diana Eck suggests that the city of Varanasi may have the world's longest history of human habitation, being a key urban centre at the time of the Mauryan and Gupta Empires, as well as a millennium of Muslim and British domination. It was a centre for the development of a range of religious traditions, reform movements, site of Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath, and the location of some of the most important educational institutions of the last two centuries. In many ways it is an archetypal 'mythical city', shaped and sometimes weighted down by representations of its past. Deeper historical notions of the city merge

with its utopian trajectories: Perhaps it was the

location of the fortress of the Kashi tribe mentioned in the Mahabharata, and capital of the Kashi kingdoms discussed in Vedic literature. Myth merges more clearly into narrative of a thriving trading and commercial centre in the 6th Century BC, at the confluence of the Varuna and Ganges, dotted with inland pools and lakes and colonies of ashrams – each adding to the value of the city as a Hindu centre (Eck, 5-25). We can think of Varanasi as the spatial framing of cosmological thought across at least two millennia – a place that transformed, for example, through humankind's shift from ritual sacrifice to theism and the rise of more universal notions of god.

The city as ancient religious centre has shaped modern responses to social conflicts and consensus, as well as how its populations have reconciled its heritage with notions of urban development. Banaras, in common with other north Indian centres was a key location in the development of middle class notions of urban improvement from the late 19th Century. The focus of its philanthropists, patrons of religion, and commercial communities, was often the reform of the urban poor. This colonial/Victorian notion of improvement sat well with Hindu notions of 'dharma' but distanced urban elites from the popular cultures of urban workers. The latter always straddled the formal and informal sectors, moving between each over time. The existence of this interchangeability and mobility, manual work in bazaars, multiple small enterprises, transport and construction, and street-vending complicated the city's industrial histories. More importantly, it created a rich array of social



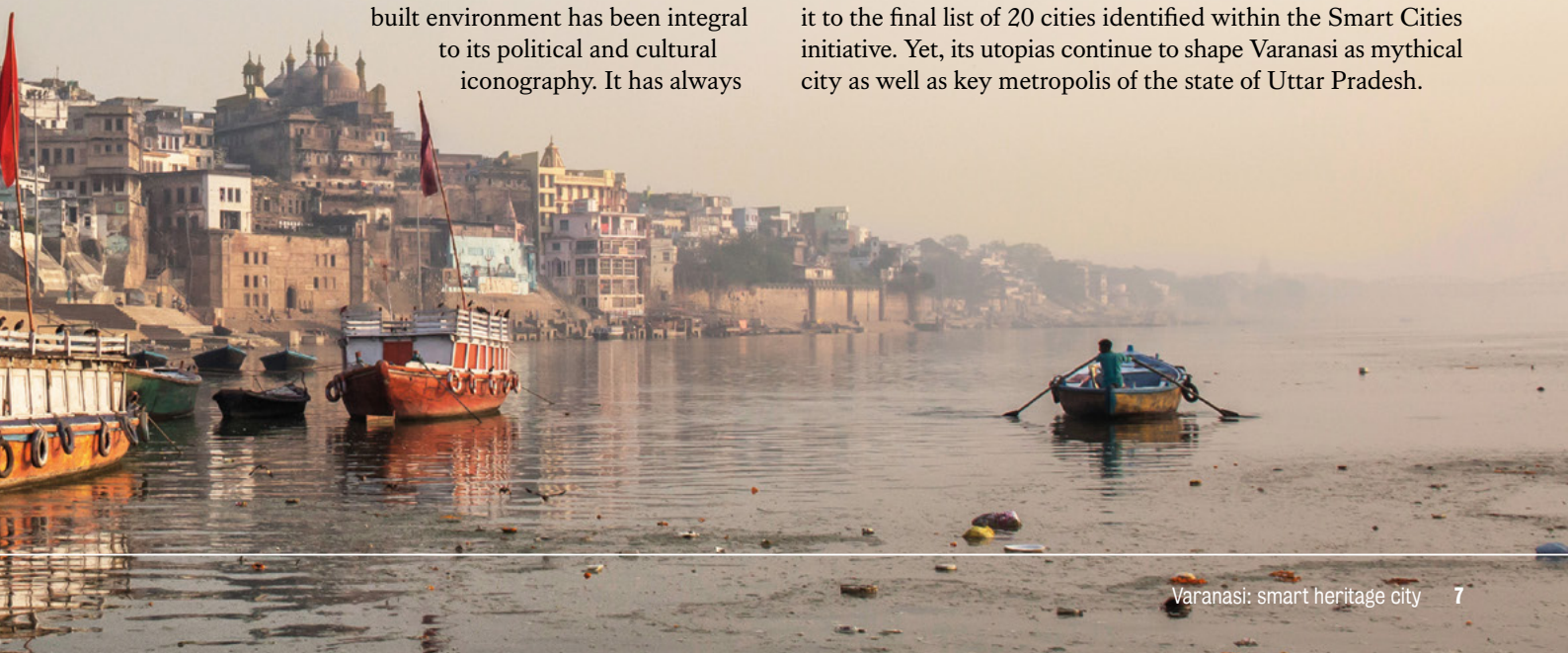
perspectives on the idea of the civic space itself: Citizens of Banaras, recently invited into bids for Smart City status, were drawn from all of these sectors as in the past, or from long term migration of cultivators into the city, floating populations of workers and seasonal labourers. In addition, the city has been the home for a diverse array of public arts practices, theatre, poetry and music.

Other visions for the modern city have been driven by administrative and commercial elites, and Banaras continues to be high on the list of state and central government initiatives around heritage and tourism development. From the early Twentieth Century, Varanasi was near the top of the urban commercial and administrative hierarchy of the colonial state of UP. From Mughal times it had been a centre for the production of silk fabric, muslin and perfumes. Eventually, as well as a town for silks, it also became a key city for agricultural redistribution and for brassware and artisanal industries. It emerged as a key political and commercial centre in the early colonial period, while under the patronage of the Rajas of Banaras. Under direct colonial rule from 1794, the city's rail infrastructure gradually developed through the 19th Century, but it was unable to compete with the large industrial city of Kanpur. As civil service and military personnel settled in the town, its territorial boundaries extended, to accommodate municipal services, sanitary infrastructure and new residential settlements. From the early twentieth century, financial services also expanded to finance new (especially small scale) urban manufacturing units. Nandini Gooptu has explained the significance of the focus of financiers on small scale units: able to by-pass factory legislation, fundraise capital and find capital from within family networks, and a greater ability to adapt to rapidly fluctuating market conditions. (Gooptu, 37-8).

Over the Twentieth Century and new millennium then, the mobility and vibrancy of Varanasi's population and built environment has been integral to its political and cultural iconography. It has always

been a key focal point for the development of political, social and environmental activism, which was historically rooted not only in its diverse cultural institutions, but also in movements for 'social service' in the late colonial period. This history has allowed the city to spawn a wide range of arts and environmental NGOs in recent decades, not least those concentrated on sanitation and water supply – for example the BHU led Shrishti Sanrakshanam. Such movements have started to consider the relationship between demographic change, the built environment and alternative notions of heritage. These are rooted in urban realities: The city has experienced considerable changes in land use, significant slum populations, and a water supply system that is around 125 years old. Only 30% of the total area of the city is provided with an underground sewer network, which means that most sewage is directly disposed, untreated, in the Ganga. Door to door waste collection does not cover the whole of the city either. Ganga pollution is perhaps one of the key challenges for the city, with toxins in the waters reaching levels estimated to be around 3000 times over the 'safe' limit suggested by the WHO.

With a population of around 1.4 million today, which is gender skewed, the city is currently divided into 5 zones – the Core area, Trans Varuna, which includes Sarnath, the densely populated central area of South Varuna, South Assi, the location of the Banaras Hindu University, and the Trans Ganga Zone, outside municipal but inside planning boundaries. Although earmarked for the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (Hriday) project, Varanasi's leaders were unable to harness its potential benefits. This is despite its 300 significant monuments, the preservation of 20 sites by the Archaeological Survey of India, 84 ghats and around 3500 temples and mosques which have been a significant draw for international tourists. Despite this palimpsest of utopian visions for the city, thrown up by its multiple social histories, Varanasi, like the other cities of UP, failed to make it to the final list of 20 cities identified within the Smart Cities initiative. Yet, its utopias continue to shape Varanasi as mythical city as well as key metropolis of the state of Uttar Pradesh.



Chandigarh: paradigm shifts

Anu Sabhlok, IISER Mohali

‘Chandigarh, brave new Chandigarh, born out of the harsh plains of Punjab without umbilical cord.’

Charles Correa, The Architectural Review, London, June 1964

“Let this be a new town unfettered by the traditions of the past, an expression of the nation’s faith into the future,” proclaimed Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister as he spelt out his brief for the city of Chandigarh. Chandigarh was planned as the new capital city of east Punjab in order to house refugees from Pakistan. Nehru saw Chandigarh as a symbol of modern India, a city that would propel the nation into modernity, planning that would create a new kind of citizen for the newly independent democratic nation-state. Since then, the building of Chandigarh has served as a training school for a whole generation of Indian architects who have then gone onto express the modernist idiom in several other cities.

Planning on ‘terra nullius’

Contrary to popular belief, Chandigarh was not planted on ‘empty’ harsh plains waiting to be inhabited. For the first phase of Chandigarh, 8,500 acres of fertile land, consisting of 17 villages were acquired in one go under the land acquisition act of 1894. In another few years 24 additional villages dotted with agricultural land and mango groves was acquired. Much of the conflict that surrounded this land acquisition and the displacement of farmers (landed and not-landed) does not form part of the dominant narratives surrounding the history of this planned city. Plots were sold to the general public with the first preference reserved for displaced groups and individuals. Amidst political chaos and the socio-economic travails of a fledgling nation state, the new city, about 250 miles north of Delhi, was to serve an important socio-psychological purpose. This was India’s heroic break with its past erasing along the way the immediate tumultuous happenings and much older town planning traditions. Nehru argued that the site for the new town is “free from existing encumbrances of old towns and old traditions.” (quoted in Kalia, 1987).



A team of foreign architects were brought in to propel India into modernity by planning a modern Indian city. The initial plan was conceived by the American architects Albert Mayer and Matthew Nowicki who planned a city divided into superblocks and attempted an idiom that fused Indian and western traditions. The final plan and design of the key buildings however was the work of Swiss-French Architect popularly known as Le Corbusier. His team consisted of his cousin Pierre Jeanneret and an English couple Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry. Corbusier took the superblock from Mayer's plan and converted these into sectors – self-sufficient neighbourhood units – each sector had its own marketplace, schools and religious institutions.

In sector one, the head of the city, Corbusier placed the major government offices – the secretariat, the high court and the assembly building. To one side of this grid plan was placed the University and a medical research hospital whereas on the other side was the industrial area. The city was to be surrounded on all sides for a radius of 5 Km by forested land.

An existing rivulet running through the city was framed on both sides by green spaces and called the leisure valley. The sectors or “containers of family life” as Corbusier envisaged them were segregated on the basis of social class (even as the planners claimed that houses would be planned for all sections of residents) and traffic circulation too was segregated into a hierarchy of roads ranging from v1s to v7s – V1's would be the high speed roads with mixed traffic whereas the V7s were designed as bicycle paths.

The capitol complex towards the north dominated the plan by its sheer monumentality and symbolism woven into each architectural gesture. Notable amongst the structures at the capitol complex is the open hand monument. This is a graphic representation of an open palm that is placed on top of a tall column and pivoted in a manner so as to move with the wind. The open hand is placed within an open air theatre called the trench of consideration. Two symbolic ideas in this structure revealed the social and political dreams of the moment. The trench of consideration was envisaged as a place where the



citizens of the city would gather and deliberate upon the matters of the state. The open hand symbolised the idea that this city was open to give and open to receive ideas. In this way, through architecture and planning a new kind of relationship was to be forged between the citizen and the democratic nation-state. Ironically, the open hand monument today is closed to public gatherings. That the plaza surrounding the trench of consideration is used as a heavily guarded parking for high court judges speaks volumes to the huge gap between planning intentions and real urban politics. The city itself has a complicated political situation for it serves as the capital for two states – Haryana and Punjab even while it is governed by the Central government (is an union territory).

Between heritage and smart urban futures

Today, it would be impossible to refer to Chandigarh in isolation. On the south the city grid has expanded into Mohali – which is the Punjab extension of Chandigarh and to the west is Haryana’s planned city – Panchkula. Together the region is referred to as the tri-city area. The 5Km designated green belt now only exists in small pockets. Chandigarh too has moved from the initial Nehruvian-Corbusier ideal of being a socialist city into becoming the quintessential neo-liberal city. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the changed land use of the industrial sectors in Chandigarh to an area that now

houses large malls and boutique hotels. Large tracts of land continue to be acquired as the tri-city area expands into its periphery to make place for IT parks, Aero city, Knowledge city and developer led real-estate projects. Chandigarh today has the highest per capita car ownership in the country.

More recently, Chandigarh has seen movement in two seemingly opposing directions. – The Archaeological Survey of India (along with Chandigarh administration) has submitted an application for Chandigarh to be in UNESCO’s list of world heritage cities. At the same time, the city is a keen participant in the smart cities challenge. The city proposal for smart city outlines a high tech solution to a range of citizen services including traffic management, sanitation and building construction. How these two visions for the city will be reconciled remains to be seen. The smart city challenge initiated a series of citizen workshops, online groups and discussion forums addressing the future of the city. While this was an interesting and perhaps an unprecedented attempt at involving the citizens of the city in its planning, it is also important to note that missing from these publics are working class populations particularly the migrant labour populations. In its race towards infrastructure development the city relies upon this group to labour and create and yet the labouring populations are not (and have never been historically) included as citizens of the city (they create). It is time that these subaltern voices are given their place and ‘right to the city.’





NASHIK Marathon



Photo by Ayona Datta

Nashik Police Department mural to encourage citizens in a range of activities including the marathon and using apps for safety



Nashik: from kumbh city to smart city

Shilpa Dahake, IISER Mohali

Notably known as temple city, Nashik is also famous as garden city or Kashi of South India. Here Sinhastha Kumbh Mela is organised after every 12 years. The Marathi proverb “Nashik nav tekdivar vasavile” (Nashik is settled on nine peaks), aptly describes the geographical location of Nashik on nine peaks of the Deccan plateau. The river Godavari flows through the centre of the city. Also known as Ganges of South, River Godavari originates from Brahmagiri Mountain in Trimbakeshwar (a temple town around 30 km from Nashik) and flows from the centre of the Nashik city. The river is religiously significant. The population of the city was above 15 lakhs in 2011 census with about 85% of the population comprising of Hindus.

There are a number of ghats on both the banks of the river from Gharpure to Dasak. There are several old temples which were built during the Peshwa rule. Even in the new settlements one can find temple in every colony and every street. There are public as well as several private temples are also there. The identity of the city in recent times, completely shifted from being a traditional pilgrimage centre to a modern city with global links, though its religious importance has not diminished.

Sedimented histories of Nashik

The town of Nashik lies on both sides of the Godavari. The part of the river on which Nashik is built is in shape like an inverted S with a bend first to the right and then to the left. The city contains three main divisions: Old Nashik, the sacred

settlement of Panchvati, a place of no great size on the left or east bank of the river; middle or Musalman Nashik, formerly called Gulshanabad or the City of Roses, on the right bank and to the south of Panchvati; and modern or Maratha Nashik, also on the right bank, lying north and west of Musalman Nashik and west of Panchvati. The most important of these three divisions is middle Nashik across the river and to the south of Panchvati. Though to distinguish it from the western suburbs which were added by the Marathas it is known as Musalman Nashik, middle Nashik is an old Hindu settlement. (1883:462)

This excerpt from Vol. XVI of Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency of Nashik summarises Pre-British period of Nashik. The settlement initially started along the left bank of the river. This area is known as Panchavati, it is believed to be chosen Lord Rama for his stay during exile. According to Puranas, during exile Ram-Lakshman-Sita resided in Panchavati – Tapovan area (currently also known as Panchavati and Tapovan) for some time. In the Vol. XVI of Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency of Nashik, this period is described as:

According to Brahman tradition the sage Agastya, who introduced Aryan civilisation from the north into the Deccan, when visited at his hermitage near Nashik, presented Ram the hero of the Ramayan, with a bow and other wonder-working weapons, and advised him to pass the rest of his exile at Panchavati on the Godavari opposite Nashik. Janasthan or Nashik is described in the Ramayan as a forest country rich



in fruit and flower trees, full of wild beasts and birds, and inhabited by tribes of Rakshasas. (1883:181)

As informed by many locals, there are number temples and a cave on the left bank of the river which is believed to be inhabited by them. The families staying in this area are predominantly Hindu and are engaged in ritualistic and religious activities. Buddhism became dominant in the Nashik region during 200–600 AD, as expressed by a group of old Buddhist caves known as ‘Pandu Lena’. Later, around 11th-12th century AD Jainism became prominent, as evident from the presence ‘Chambhar Caves’ (Kulkarni 1981)

The Muslim population settled along the right bank of the river under Islamic rule during 13–16th century. The Islamic period added various ‘puras’ such as Kokanipura, Pathapura,

Kazipura, Naikwadipura, Multanpura, and Kalapura to the landscape of Nashik. The city during this period was enclosed with ‘darwajas’ or gates such as Kazipura Darwaja, Trimbak Darwaja, Darbar Darwaja, Baghur Darwaja, and Delhi Darwaja (Kulkarni 1981:13). A few remnants of this period are still visible in the city.

In the 17th century, Peshwas of Pune won control over Nashik. The palace of Peshwas at the end of the main bazaar road is converted to Police Station and Public Library in recent times. Under their reign, many temples were constructed and renovated along both the banks of the river. Various mansions or ‘wadass’, the ‘peths’ and temples from this period are still standing tall as a significant part urban landscape of the city.

Later in 19th after prolonged fights, the Nashik area came completely under British rule. A British army officer describes Nashik city as a “pleasing spot, a considerable town with two palaces, several beautiful temples on the river bank and some handsome and spacious buildings and rich neighbourhoods of gardens and vineyards” (Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency 1883: 537). The city limit expanded under British rule with the addition of the collector’s office, criminal and civil courts, Land Records and Revenue offices, Police headquarters, and parade ground. These additions were away from the city, but well within the reach. Following the British planning concept, officer’s bungalows, gardens, hospitals, schools and libraries were also introduced. This led to implementation of the British model of administration in

Table 1: Chronological population and spatial growth

Year	Population	Area
1881	24,100	13sqkm
1931	45,744	20sqkm
1951	97,042	47sqkm
1971	1,76,021	56.32sqkm
2011	1,486,053	259sqkm

the area. In 1882, the local self-government was appointed by the British rule in Nashik (Kulkarni 1981).

The Nashik was a fairly insignificant town till 1947. The population drastically multiplied in the first half of this century, owing to its development as the district headquarters. The economy of the city was mainly relying on the religious activities and related trade. The migrants in majority settled on the right bank of the river Godavari. This new settlement adopted the British planning principles. The migration introduced religious and cultural diversity in the city. The growth of population led to expansion of the city boundaries. The table 1 shows chronological expansion of the city.

The city landscape acquired many new features like industrial units, planned and unplanned shops, residential buildings, both cooperative housing societies and independent bungalows, during this period. The city started to expand in all directions. The retail activity both private and municipal increased by 5 times and started to spread outside the core area (Kulkarni 1981). By the 1960s, the city started to industrialise after independence following the policy framework devised by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Many public sector industries like Nashik Industrial Co-operative Estate, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and State Investment Corporation of Maharashtra were established during 1960s, making the city a significant member on the industrial map of the country. After independence, investments, irrigation schemes and electricity, improved the share of agricultural economy significantly, making it a leading producer of a variety of grapes.

Between tradition and modernity in Nashik

'Nashik provides a blend of tradition and modernism as it strives to be one of the leading cities in India to live, work and play. It provides city living at its best, with convenient and affordable public transport, safe and sustainable civic services and a responsive local government. Nashik chooses to preserve its cultural heritage while creating a sustainable future.'

'Nashik prides itself in being a safe city to walk and cycle. Here, we motivate and inspire everyone – from visitors to the local community to go out and enjoy the great outdoors which are paired best with visits to the local wineries and vineyards.'

Vision statement from Nashik Smart City proposal

After the adoption of neoliberal economic reforms, the industrial sector increased drastically from 394 in 1971 to 7896 small-scale and 174 large-scale industries in 1997. Eventually the city became an important industrial site

along the Delhi-Mumbai corridor. The city is also part of the Golden triangle Mumbai-Pune-Nashik and thus, is of great industrial importance. It has a very strategic location, close to cities like Mumbai (185 km), Pune (210 km) and Aurangabad (190 km) in Maharashtra and Saputara (72 km) and Surat (250 km) in Gujarat. The first Development Plan was sanctioned in the year 1993 and in the subsequent period, trend of urbanisation, needs of urban populations, mode of living, modes of transportation, industrialisation, need of social and physical infrastructure, trend of migration, etc., have undergone many changes. Thus, the Nashik Municipal Corporation is working on the second Development Plan.

In recent times on the basis of Nashik's four-fold economic configuration – 'pilgrimage economy, industrial economy, defence sector economy and a strong agricultural economy', the authorities are showcasing it as a 'Best investment destination of Maharashtra'. The Nashik city is advertised as a city with:

Well-developed physical infrastructure, adequate and reliable water supply, strategic location at one vertex of the golden triangle of Mumbai, Pune and Nashik, comparatively lower environmental pollution, efficient and well-developed intra and intercity commuting facilities, excellent connectivity with other regional growth centres, developed industrial estates such as Ozar, Sinnar, Satpur and Ambad in the immediate vicinity, modern Software Technology Park at Ambad, salubrious year-round climate, a safe and secure social environment thanks to the presence of a major defense base here, excellent air and rail connectivity with other major cities, large pool of skilled, English-speaking professionals and well developed educational and healthcare sector with a large number of reputed institutions having a presence here. (TOI 2014) (Emphasis added) According to The Economic Times (2015), the city of Nashik is the second most favourable city to make investments, among the tier II Indian cities. Now, the city is focusing on competing in the race of becoming a Smart City, this project is described by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a 'mass movement towards Surajya' (Government of India).

Simultaneous occurrence of Kumbh Mela and Smart City project, converted Nashik city into an 'incubator for smart city start-up ideas'. This led to 'culmination of religion and technology' in Nashik. One major example of this is, 'Kumbhthon' a technical hackathon, to identify and address the challenges of Kumbh Mela 2015 in Nashik, with the broader aim to address the issues of urban areas in the countries of the developing world. On the other hand, the Nashik Smart City proposal conceptualised old city area, which houses large number of temples and heritage structure, for retrofitting. Around 250 acres of area is identified along the river in the periphery of city for greenfield development.

Religious tourism, industrialisation and agriculture sector, these three are major contributors of the economy to the Nashik city. Owing to these factors the city is expanding in all the directions. Following the footsteps of Mumbai and Pune, the authorities are focusing on making Nashik an investment friendly destination for private developers. In the race of becoming a 'world-class' city various 'spaces of accumulation' have sprung all across the landscape of the city.

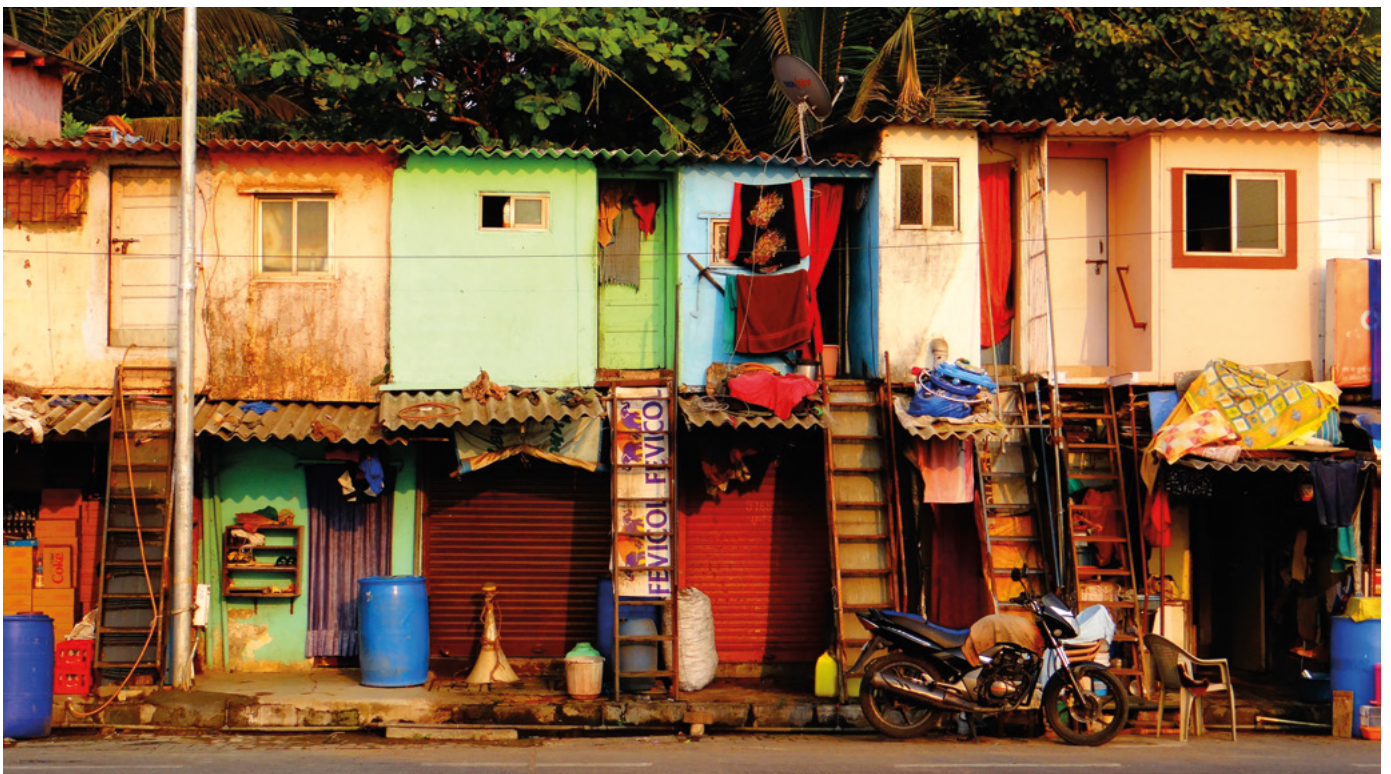


 **Rooftarp by Samir Parkar**

The city of Mumbai viewed from above is dominated by a patchwork of blue tarpaulin roof tops. A thin layer of protection from the monsoon. Roof/Tarp/City is an ongoing urban art project that works with the community to bring colour and a sense of pride to some of the most ignored parts of the city.

 **Living out of Jugaad by Shilpa Dahake**

The series of houses made out of frugal innovations or colloquially famous as 'Jugaad' in Hindi, illustrate how slum dwellers claim their right to the city.



Navi Mumbai revisited

Annappurna Shaw, IIM Calcutta

For more than a decade starting from 1988 till 2002, I had the opportunity to be closely connected via family to the then fledgling city of Navi Mumbai. As an experiment in large scale urban planning that started in 1970, directed and implemented by the state government, it was as yet unsurpassed in size covering 343.7 sq kms and promising to be a city for 'the common man'. The idealism of the early CIDCO bureaucrats to build a different kind of city with a place for everyone, rich and poor, all religions and creeds and at the same time relieve Mumbai of its immense population burden seemed to be a worthwhile goal and got me interested in its development. With numerous housing projects for middle and lower income groups underway and the APM (Agricultural Produce Market) coming up, there was an air of expectancy and hope that this would be a new breakthrough in urban living in India. However, even in those early years, side by side with the growth of the city, there were two developments that signalled deep social cleavages that would make top-down plan implementation difficult and the realisation of a modern egalitarian city, near impossible. One was the pre-existing local population who had not been consulted in any way during the long years of deliberation over the feasibility of mainland development. The bulk acquisition of their lands for the project led to much acrimony and slowed implementation. The acrimony persists to this day in parts of the region. The second was the inflow

of migrants to work as domestics in the planned nodes, as vendors in market places and to provide other services. Although the development plan for the city had made provision for LIG and EWS housing, this was not affordable for those with low end jobs or jobs in the informal economy and soon, the hillsides overlooking the developed nodes and the sides of the Thana-Belapur railway line became the site of slums and temporary shelters (Shaw, 2004).

When my fieldwork ended in 2002, most of the major nodes had been completed or were near completion, namely, Vashi, Sanpada, Airoli, Kopakhairane, CBD-Belapur and Nerul, and the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) had been formed to govern this portion. Imperatives for the stricter marketisation of land had gained intensity post liberalisation and frequent upward revisions of developed land prices characterised the decade of the nineteen-nineties along with reducing attention to social housing. There were already signs that the new city was essentially for the middle and upper middle classes.

Last month, through the two-day workshop on Navi Mumbai organised by Ratoola Kundu in TISS, Mumbai, I was able to revisit Navi Mumbai and



catch up with its growth trajectory since the early 2000s and see the outlines of where it is headed. The workshop was particularly interesting as it had representatives from CIDCO, the planning authority for Navi Mumbai, political representatives such as a councillor from the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, and grassroots representatives from the unplanned areas and local organisations such as YUVA.

Over the two days, I learnt much about the present condition of Navi Mumbai. Over a million people reside there now and according to the councillor from NMMC, it is already a 'smart city' with high levels of basic amenities, scientific solid waste management, lots of greenery and a thriving, diversified economy based on services such as ITES and education. A CIDCO representative informed us that the days of bulk acquisition of land for town building are over and the organisation is now following a 'voluntary land development model' with the aim of minimising compulsory acquisition, involving land owners as participants and incentivising land assembly. Under this model, after development, 60% of the land will be given back to owners.

This is the way CIDCO plans to develop the new town of NAINA (Navi Mumbai

Airport Influenced Notified Area), 560 sq. Kms in size, located south west of Navi Mumbai.

Giving some credence to the proposed approach was a presentation made by representatives of Khalapur, an emerging town and its surrounding community within the influence region of Navi Mumbai that through voluntary land pooling would like to become a smart city. The rationale of the local population is that soon the area will become more urbanised and rather than middlemen making all the profits through escalating land prices, this model will ensure perpetual benefit to owners. It will also encourage existing residents to remain where they are and there will be no displacement even for those without land. To implement such a plan, the support of the state government is needed and the representatives are currently working on finer details before taking the plan to the government.



While voluntary land pooling and local level participation in decisions on land use change are to be welcomed, they do not provide a solution to the housing requirements of the lowest 30% of income groups such as manual and low skilled workers who provide essential services to the resident population of the newly developed areas. Many are 'naka kamgaars' or daily wagers with precarious jobs and earnings, procured by standing daily at nakas or important crossroads. Despite the difficulties and tensions of daily job search, if their housing or shelter was assured, they would somehow manage. This was forcefully brought out by a naka kamgaar representative who has been living in a slum called Tatanagar, in Belapur. The 15 year old slum has developed over a plot of government land reserved for a library. It is periodically demolished only to spring back again as those living there have no other alternative. Residents are willing to shift to a proper place if provided with basic services.

In the workshop questions were asked of both CIDCO officials and the Navi Mumbai councillor as to why slums continue to persist and if there was a chance of Tatanagar

residents ever making it to the new LIG and EWS housing CIDCO plans to build. A blame game ensued between CIDCO's chief town planner and the councillor, of lack of co-operation and delayed action. While I listened with disappointment, it reminded me of similar arguments made two decades ago to explain the growing slums on the hillsides: "It is MIDC land, we cannot help them" or from MIDC's side "they work in CIDCO's nodes, CIDCO should be responsible". The only difference was that the disinterest on the part of state representatives, whether bureaucrats or politicians, to solve the housing needs of the poor seems to have become stronger with time.

A small foothold into the dynamic economy of the larger metropolitan region via secure shelter is what is sought by daily wagers and other informal economy workers, now as then. In the naka kamgaar representative's words: "garib loko ko bhi bikas hona chahiye" (there should also be development for poor people). It is a reminder of the fact that much still remains to be done before utopian visions conceived at the top can become a reality for people at the margins.



No limits please by Preetika Sharma



Snakes and ladders by Barnali Rayshukla



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Design: RF Design, www.rfportfolio.com
Approved by brand@kcl.ac.uk, July 2019



A view of Shimla by Rohit Madan

The slow contoured life of a postcolony now dreams of fast utopian futures