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Issue 04 • January 2023

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# Planning Times

PEOPLE, PLACES AND POLICIES

Issue 04 • January 2023

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*From the Editor*

*Here's to a gentle  
New Year!*

**E**veryone at Planning Times Magazine hopes you had a wonderful holiday season, and while you are about to dive into 2023, I wanted to send you very heartfelt New Year's wishes on behalf of all of us here at the magazine. In the past few years, everyone has been confronted with a variety of challenges, both large and small. Even though there is bound to be a balance of both positive and negative experiences, it is my sincere wish that the year ahead is a peaceful one for you.

The beginning of a new year is a good time to take stock of oneself and consider both the positive and negative aspects of oneself. The week surrounding the New Year is an opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection, much like a planning document during its monitoring and evaluation phase. Learning how to properly organize and prioritize one's time is one of the areas in which I would like to improve personally. I suppose that I am no longer a child, and as my responsibilities increase, I will need to make better use of the time that I have.

We hope you enjoy the January edition of the Planning Times magazine! The team at Planning Times has covered a variety of topics, ranging from encouraging the concept of child-friendly cities to discussing policy reforms pertaining to Delhi. In this issue, in addition to two fascinating interviews with the co-founders of two startup organizations—Corurban and Oneistox—we have also included a brand new section in which we review books. Thanks for reading, and we hope you have an inspirational moment or two.

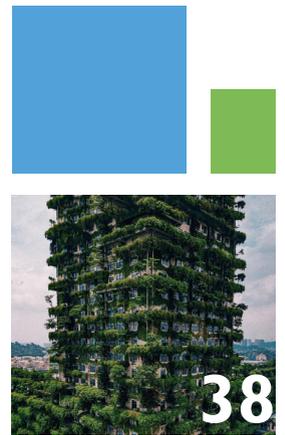


*Here's to the creativity you'll  
craft from our magazine!*

Karthik Girish  
Chief Editor  
([editor@planningtimes.com](mailto:editor@planningtimes.com))

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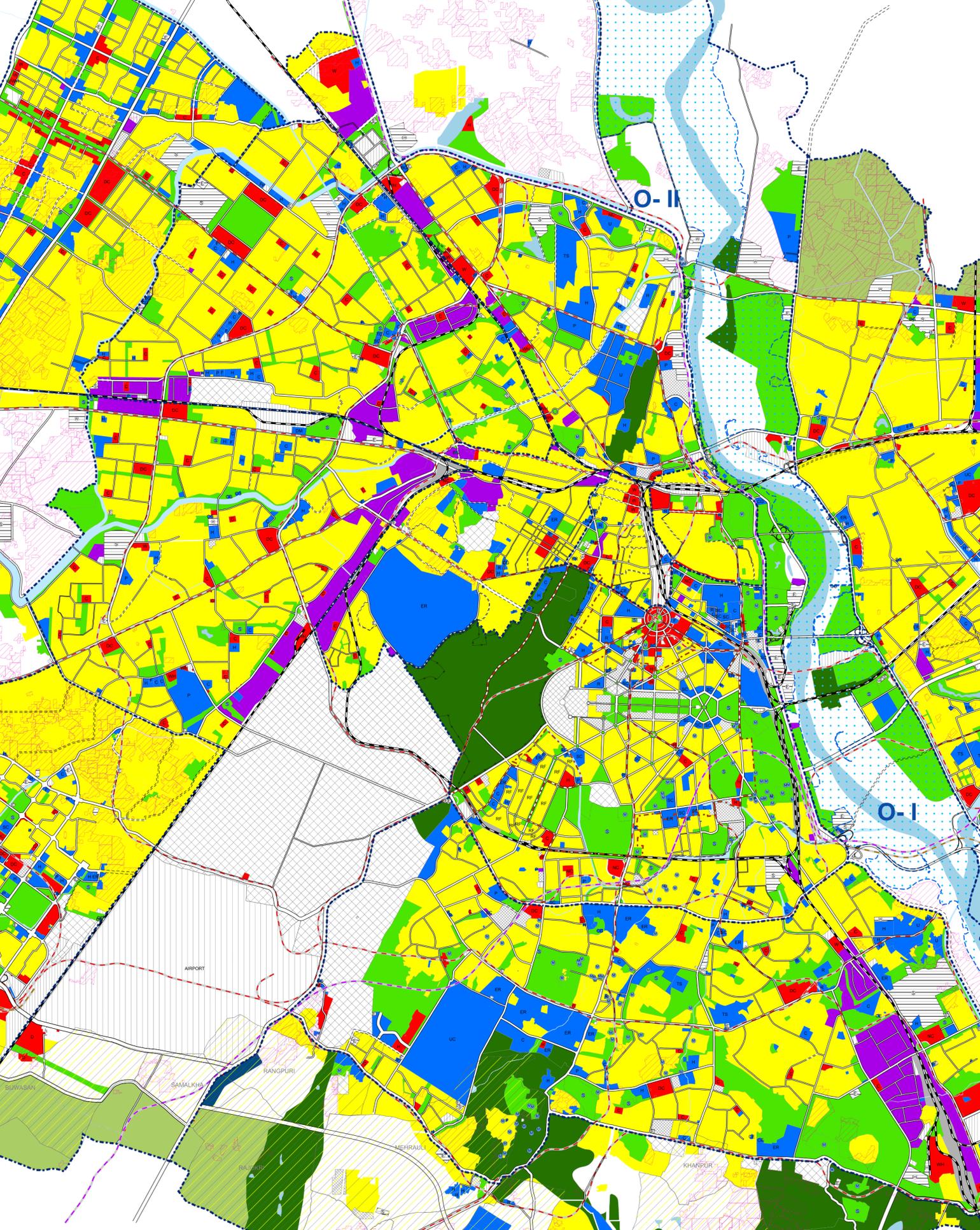
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# Delhi's new era of development

Review of recent policies and reforms for Delhi's development

BY TSOMO WANGCHUK



Draft Land Use Plan for Delhi 2041  
Source: DDA

**AS THE CAPITAL** witnesses bursting at the seams, poor air pollution and an acute land shortage, there are several amendments to policies and digital initiatives in the past year. In 2021, the draft Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) 2041 was approved by the Authority and notified to invite objections and suggestions. Since then, there have been several activities by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to factor in the expansion of the city's population as well as to streamline the process for land records, pooling, etc.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) also placed the proposed amendments to the Delhi Development Act, 1957 for public feedback and comments to ease the development processes with major amendments comprising of land pooling and urban regeneration.

The three civic bodies of Delhi were also merged into one municipal corporation in May 2022. The government brought in several more initiatives, which will be explored further in the article. While some initiatives could have been a

measure to facilitate development in the city, while others may just have been long due.

## INTEGRATING 3 DELHI MCDS

The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022 was notified by the Parliament on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, and formally came into existence, about a month later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2022.

The amendment sought to merge the three municipal corporations, North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), into a unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). During Sheila Dikshit's tenure as Chief Minister of Delhi, the Delhi Municipal Corporation was trifurcated into three MCDs in 2012. As per sources, this was to decentralize the world's second-largest Municipal Corporation. However, the uneven demography of the three MCDs left them with unequal sources of revenue. Further, as Delhi had five Municipal Corporations in total (NDMC, SDMC, EDMC, Delhi Cantonment Board and the New Delhi Municipal Council), some have



◀ *Municipal Corporation of Delhi*  
*Source: Times Now*

highlighted that Delhi had too many Municipal Corporations, which had increased costs to run operations and hire employees, while others believe it as a political move.

#### **POLICY REFORMS AND INITIATIVES IN RELATION TO DDA**

The land pooling policy of Delhi was first notified in 2013 and later in 2018 to meet the increasing demand for housing in Delhi. This was also incorporated in MPD 2021 which provided the legislative backing for the development scheme. Several years later after the introduction of the land pooling policy, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is yet to see the implementation of the policy and development in proposed sectors. Under the Land Pooling Policy, 2018, the DDA had issued notice for the formation of a consortium within 90 days for three sectors - 10-A (in Zone-N) and sectors 2 and 3 (in Zone-P-II). In these sectors, 70 per cent of landowners' participation has been achieved, however, the land parcels received for pooling were not contiguous. The DDA reopened a 90-day window for landowners (June to August 2022) to convince other landowners to pool in their land parcels and reach at least 70 per cent of contiguous land.

In August, the Ministry of

Housing and Urban Affairs placed the proposed amendments to the Delhi Development Act, 1957. Among the amendments, one included that of land pooling that gave powers to the Centre to declare pooling mandatory, even if the minimum threshold is not achieved. This left the public with divided opinions; while some believe that land pooling will ease roadblocks faced by the DDA in implementing the pooling policy, others felt this policy of mandatory pooling will result in legal battles. The Union Urban Affairs Minister also noted that as Delhi Master Plan 2041 would factor in the expansion of the city's population to nearly 3 crores by 2041, land pooling facilities would be eased through the plan.

Another major amendment proposed for DDA Act was urban regeneration. It stated that any block or area that the Centre identifies for 'regeneration' will have to be mandatorily redeveloped, and the Centre will have the power to direct DDA or a municipal body to notify such areas. The amendment will apply to areas including *lal dora* of the urbanised village, developed areas and vacant land.

Furthermore, a web-based portal, 'Land Management Information System' (LMIS)', was

also launched in October 2022 for digital management of DDA's land records, and to ensure online self-registration and assessment of damage charges by occupants and online damage collection, thereby promoting a citizen-centric approach.

#### **MORE INITIATIVES AND AMENDS CONTINUE**

In the wake of several cases where public land was fraudulently transferred to private entities, the Revenue Department of Delhi decided to collect land details and make them accessible on a single central server. This will include land data relating to evacuee properties, Gram Sabha land and land acquired or under the process of acquisition. Further, DDA launched its 2022 housing scheme in September, allowing people to book around 8500 EWS and Lower Income Groups (LIG) category flats in Narela online.

Lastly, MCD decided to digitize its property tax filing system with details of owners to identify those evading taxes.

“

**There is a gap between government initiatives and their delivery to the citizens.**

### CHALLENGES STILL REMAIN

Delhi's population growth is recording heavily since 1951. With the growth of the city, several problems especially in terms of land and housing have become more acute. Delhi's Masterplan 2041 has projected a population of 3 crores. With the rising population, the city requires proper strategies to accommodate the same. Redevelopment projects of the Central government, such as Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan, the Prime Minister-Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana (PM-UDAY) scheme, and the DDA's Land Pooling policy, are expected to

benefit at least 1.35 crore residents of Delhi.

However, there are several roadblocks faced. PM-UDAY scheme could not be completed in almost 80 unauthorized colonies that fall under Zone O, and MPD 2021 restricts construction in this zone. DDA has also faced multiple hurdles in its implementation such as challenges in relation to land mutation, stamp duty, contiguity of 70 per cent pooled land, etc. To resolve the bottlenecks, the Government is taking steps to make processes simpler for managing and streamlining developments in

the city as discussed in the article. Even in terms of land pooling, the Government has decided to facilitate the participants by amending the Delhi Development Act, 1957, wherein the concept of mandatory pooling (to achieve the contiguity in a sector) has been proposed.

Yet, there remains a huge gap between the initiatives by the government and the delivery of services to the citizens. Apart from introducing these schemes and policies, the Government must provide a clear framework, explain their benefits to the people and build confidence among the beneficiaries.



SMART CITY

# A LINE IN THE SAND

Is the futuristic NEOM city too good to be true?

BY NANCY GROVER



**WE HAVE SEEN** many science fiction movies that had given a glimpse of what our future city can shape into. Well, Saudi Arabia might provide us with a real experience of a dystopian city soon. They are taking a step towards a futuristic city life with no cars, no streets, and zero net carbon emissions called NEOM. Here are some interesting points about the project, which is currently in the pipeline.

The word Neom comes from the combination of the Greek words for “new” and the Arabic term for “future.” It aims to be a futuristic version of paradise that will incorporate a vast data-gathering network, including drone and facial-recognition technology in the whole area. Moreover, the size of the visionary city will approximately cover an area of the country Belgium.

Since 2017, Saudi Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman, better known as MBS, has been working with overseas consultants to develop his futuristic vision for the \$500 billion cities.

The city’s new site is in the northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia. It will stretch across 26,500 square kilometers of the barren desert on the Red Sea coast.

**THE \$500 BILLION** cities will cover 10,000 square miles of barren desert and coastline. It claims to welcome the “world’s greatest minds and best talents” to the best-paying jobs in the world’s most livable city. In addition, the prince wants to develop an area to target economic diversification for the Saudi Kingdom. Most importantly it will increase business in emerging industries such as biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and renewable energies.



▲  
*THE LINE is a vertical city*  
 Source: Designboom

**THE LINE** is a 106-mile-long belt that will stretch the mountains of northwest Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea. It links from the coast of the Red Sea to the hills and upper valleys of the northwest of Saudi Arabia. According to the development plans, it will be accessible to more than 40% of the global population. People will be able to reach NEOM in less than a four-hour flight. Also, 13% of the world's trade will happen through the Red Sea.

“  
**There are still too many hurdles to overcome.**

According to a 2019 Article from Wall Street Journal, extraordinary ideas were laid out in 2,300 pages of confidential documents by consultants at Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Co., and Oliver Wyman. The document dates back to September 2018. WSJ added in their article that the consultants working on the project have overused science fiction jargon and corporate words.

It includes human gene editing clinics, robot dinosaurs, flourishing the agricultural sector through

cloud seeding, robots performing domestic duties, human genetic modification, glowing desert sand, and 24/7 government surveillance. Also, in the leaked report, there was a mention of the forcible relocation of local tribes. So, it's not necessary that NEOM will be the new face of humanity!

**NEOM AIMS TO BE** a sustainable and urbanized vision that creates hope for the future. There are enthusiastic promises and ideas on the surface, but no one can ignore the voices of the Huwaitat tribe. The tribe lives across Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Sinai peninsula for generations.

According to Alia Hayel Aboutiyah al-Huwaiti, an activist and member of the tribe currently living in London, the forced displacement of the people indicates the kingdom's lack of care towards tribal communities.

Dan Cooper, head of real estate development strategy for Deloitte gives his opinion on Saudi's development projects. According to him, market dynamics are continuously changing, but the country fails to address immediate market requirements. This stops their development projects reach the desired potential. Like Riyadh's King Abdullah Financial District (KAJD) and Jeddah's King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC). Therefore, to make this project a success, the government should pay closer attention to external market conditions.

Till now, there have been many cost overruns, and the funding is also draining. Also, the technology required for the futuristic city is still not available. It will take time.

Construction for *THE LINE* has begun  
 Source: Dezeen



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# CFCs for Children

**This is a three-part series covering the concept and need for child friendly cities (CFCs). In part one, the author discusses the integration, institutionalization and innovation of child friendly cities.**

BY AAKRITI

**CHILDREN** play a very limited role in the decision making processes that shape their living environment. This article concerns the role of children in planning and decision making regarding the subjects which involve them. It examines the significance of their role, both as participants in the decision making that shapes their environment and as users of the city.

The article draws on a number of research studies, in particular, studies on participatory planning experiences involving children. It is an attempt to define literature and interconnect it with real life contexts.

It talks about creating Child Friendly Cities and various implications associated highlighting the significance of Integration, Institutionalization and Innovation. Integration implies the inclusion of

children in formulation of plans and policies that are focused on them. Institutionalization implies towards the need of structured framework and the need of institutions that address the needs of children. Innovation implies the new ways to incorporate children in the scenario.

**IN OTHER WORDS**, there should be integration of ideas, actions and knowledge, institutionalization of several efforts that have been carried out in isolation, and innovation of efficient ways to fulfil the child needs. Various parameters are set so as to organize the different aspects of the situation. Then certain issues are identified. They are defined taking the evidences from real life as well as own comprehension and understanding. The basic ideals revolve around poverty, insecurity, inaccessibility, lack of services and ignorance.

“  
**Children need to be incorporated while planning for cities.**”







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# Child participation is mainly important because they have the ability to mobilize support and they can also bring unique perspectives that need to be taken.

**CHILDREN** represent a large percentage of urban population. They are an important part of cities. They live and grow there. But rich or poor, children are rarely taken into consideration in city planning. They are generally excluded from the decision making that shapes their environment, their living areas, and the places they visit and use daily, the places which are their own.

Children are users of certain specific places such as schools and parks, but adults give shape to these places. Adults control the use those places by children. This has created a gap between the expected outcomes and reality.

**PLANNING** for the environment considering children should be carried out with children in mind. The fundamental differences between the needs, affinities and behavior of children and adults should be taken into consideration for every aspect. Fundamental concepts of a children friendly approach should include multifunctionality, increased possibilities for land use conversion as well as for optimum use of land and active participation and involvement of children in shaping

their living environment.

According to Eliana Riggio “In an inclusive, transparent, responsive system of governance, all citizens are given due consideration, regardless of age, ethnic origin, income, gender or ability.

**THE CONCEPT** of “Child Friendly Cities” has been developed to ensure that city governments consistently make decisions in the best interests of children, and that cities are places where children’s rights to a healthy, caring, protective, educative, stimulating, non-discriminating, inclusive, culturally rich environment are addressed.”

Children are influenced by living environment and are as well as capable of influencing it. Poor adaptation to needs leads to consequences that are not just limited to health and education. Child participation is mainly important because they have the ability to mobilize support and they can also bring unique perspectives that need to be taken. But as Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas propose, participation is not justified unless it is “free, informed and meaningful.”

With Industrialization, people began to re-examine the role of children in cities. Children, for the starting are considered the most vulnerable among the urban dwellers. Although children did make a place for themselves in urban life, but the cities were poorly adapted to their needs. People began to question whether children should be allowed to live in cities and whether cities were apt for them to grow up in. But with time, the concern shifted towards making cities livable for children.

Child Friendly Cities as an initiative was launched in 1996 to act on the resolution passed during the second UN conference on Human settlements (Habitat II) to make cities livable for all which in terms of UNICEF was aimed to

put “children first”. UN conference declared well-being of children as the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and of good governance. It clearly supports the involvement of children in city planning: “The needs of children and youth, particularly with regard to their living environment, have to be taken fully into account.

Special attention needs to be paid to the participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns, and neighborhoods; this is in order to secure the living conditions of children and of youth and to make use of their insight, creativity, and thoughts on the environment.”

These declarations are backed up by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989.

The Convention includes a number of sections directly relating to the participation of children in urban planning, such as Section 12 on the right of children to freely express their opinions about issues that affect them. (Karen Malone, 2006).

According to a baseline study regarding “Status of Children in Urban India”-2016, India is home to 472 million children under the age of 0-18 years, comprising 39 percent of the country’s total population. Out of the 128.5 million children residing in urban areas, close to 7.8 million children under the age of 0-6 years still live in abject poverty and poor conditions in informal settlements, making it imperative that we plan and build sustainable and inclusive cities from their perspective. This trend represents both an enormous opportunity for India’s growth and leadership in urban development, as well as a great challenge to deliver a higher quality of life to more citizens at 30 to 40 percent lower costs than in more sparsely populated areas. Children’s requirements are often neglected by urban planning processes and mainstream discussions about urbanism.

Inclusive and child-friendly cities must provide a physical environment that ensures children’s health, develops their facilities and fosters their love for community and for nature. The solution to the sprawl, inadequate amenities and lack of proper social infrastructure lies not only on provision of effective services but in improving planning. The needs of children have not been taken into account yet. Young children need day care, health care, nutrition and a safe and healthy environment which is accessible, equitable and affordable. Lack of provision of basic services has an immediate effect on overall development of children.



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# Outside the box with oneistox

BY PLANNING TIMES TEAM

**This is a two-part interview with the co-founder of Oneistox, Harkunwar Singh. Oneistox provides online cohort-based courses for architects, engineers, and designers for their professional growth.**

**In our first session, we wanted to understand the problem they were addressing, which soon blossomed into a career-transforming idea, not just for the co-founders but also for the users of Oneistox.**

**Please tell us about the organisation and the team.**

Oneistox is around 3-year-old organization. We started with doing offline workshops and taught around 800 students who were all architecture students from across the country like Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, etc. In the initial years, we would hop weekend after weekend to different places teaching stuff about computational design, 3D printing fabrication, and model making. After COVID-19 pandemic, we shifted our approach toward online learning. We spent approximately a year building some online content along with figuring out what sort of a product would go into solving the problem with respect to education and architectural space. Eventually, in the last one and a half years, we were able to narrow down a problem and we started building

courses that lead to employability.

We are four co-founders, all in our mid-20s – 3 of us are batchmates from the Department of Architecture, School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Delhi: Vipanchi Handa, Chaithanya Murali, and me, Harkunwar Singh. Our fourth co-founder, Mehul Kumar, is a Computer Science Engineer from IIT Madras.

As of today, when we put together a one-liner of what we do at Oneistox, I say ‘We provide online cohort-based courses for architects, engineers, and designers for their professional growth’ because these courses lead to employability and better jobs which are not seen in the industry in traditional way.

**What kind of work does Oneistox involve in?**

When we graduated four years back, I noticed 90% of my batchmates were lost in terms of

“  
**Architecture jobs were not intellectually rewarding. In most of the firms, they were just drafting and doing repetitive tasks, thereby hating it. The pay was also very less.**

careers. I believe this was mainly because of two reasons: first, the jobs were not intellectually rewarding. In most of the firms, they were just drafting and doing repetitive tasks, thereby hating it. Second, the pay was very less.

We started doing research and talked to a lot of people, especially in the education space and architecture industry. During the research, we came across a couple of reports by McKinsey and UN which helped us realize that it somehow led to one common conclusion. The construction industry is massive and because of the sheer scale of the industry, it is less digitized. Because it is not digitized, work is brute-force oriented and that leads to lesser salaries. This becomes a vicious cycle of lesser digitization leading to lesser pay. All the fields that pay high are the ones that are heavily digitized such as media, IT



◀ *The co-founders of Oneistox.  
From left to right: Mehul Kumar (CTO),  
Vipanchi Handa (COO), Harkunwar  
Singh(CEO), Chaithanya Murali (CMO)*

and other parallel fields. For us, the intent became where is construction headed, how can that be made more digitized and what are the fields that are going into more digital space.

We started exploring computational design using data algorithms and data structures to come up with designs and solutions to different problems. BIM is another field where we identified data collaboration and data management leading to better work as it brings in a lot of efficiency to construction. Further we started exploring construction and project management; building automation

“

**We quickly realized that we wanted to facilitate people working in this industry towards a more tech-first career that offers them more intellectually challenging work as well as a rewarding space.**

such as 3D printing, prefabrication at a more advanced level; dry construction; GIS, etc.

We started categorizing more futuristic fields in this entire space and things we can do around it. We figured that access to such fields is very limited in our country and most people must go abroad to get quality education which is a very expensive affair. That took a couple of years of understanding to be able to narrow down this problem statement very crisply. We then realized what we wanted to work towards – to facilitate people working in this industry towards a more tech-first career that offers them more intellectually challenging work as well as a rewarding space.

What we do in today's date at Oneistox is – we bring senior people from the best or top firms in the world like Zaha Hadid Architects to Foster and Partners to AECOM, to build the courses. From creating content to structuring the courses to teaching and engaging with the students. This is how students learn at Oneistox platform and get jobs at the end of the day.

**How did the idea of Oneistox originate?**

We had no clarity when we started, we only had an intent and wanted to do something about it. Rest it was all an evolutionary process. Vipanchi and I led and mentored our first Oneistox workshop, and we had around 140 people who came to attend it.

They were from across the country as well as from other countries of Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Middle East, and the UK. We spoke to each of the students and the conversations from the workshop gave us very good insight into the problem and the education gaps.

Then came the second phase of online learning after the pandemic. We had to figure out what online learning was all about and had to figure out answers to many questions – How do we teach someone online who is going to build things in the real world? What is it that we need to take care of? Why is online learning so boring? We had to learn about the pedagogy of online learning, gamification, octalysis, engagement, etc. Back in my school days, I enjoyed playing online games such as Age of empires, FarmVille and SIM city. Similarly, we wanted to create an entire gamified experience while people learn.

The other part of it included about understanding how individuals learn from other individuals. For example, whenever someone learns something, I believe 10% of the learning comes when someone teaches or imparts to them (like learning in most of the education platforms), next 20% of the learning comes from peer-to-peer learning. 70% of the major learning comes when people have a hands-on project, i.e., when they are made to solve a problem. We wanted to address the entire 100% spectrum and that is what the evolution of the next phase was. What is an online learning and where do we lie? In the last one and a half years, it all started coming together as a product that we wanted to offer. I think we still have a lot to figure out in terms of top-class learning in the online space remotely for someone who is going to build the world tomorrow in the real world. At the same time, we

need to continuously iterate because the world outside is evolving and there are new technologies that are coming together. So how are we bringing that content on the latest technologies that are happening in the industry to a learner on the platform. That is sort of a way that the entire thing is coming together.

Further, I think we four as co-founders have a lot of complementary skills. I have never seen a better problem solver than Vipanshi and Mehul in my life. Anything that comes to them, they are able to break it down into smaller parts and come up with the best solution for it. Chaitanya is always on top of his feet in terms of executing and gets things done in no time. That simply came together for us as the core unit. Since the mission was so exciting for a lot of people about trying to bring a better direction to the industry as well as to the people working in the industry, it brought a lot of people together that this is something worth working on. Today, we are a team of 100 people in our office and around 25% are SPA graduates who are my seniors, juniors as well as batchmates. That is how it started coming together.

The third part is investors. They saw value in what we are doing, and they came on board to back us. We got funded by companies such as Ycombinator, Airbnb, Dropbox, etc. to individual investors like Amit Ranjan who is the founder of SlideShare, and a couple more who have built tech companies in the past themselves. That's how these people came to mentor us and guided us to build this company.

**Were there any other challenges that came across and how were you able to tackle them?**

There are different sets of challenges everyday when it comes to building a company. From having to understand finances, legality,

“

**Today, we are a team of 100 people in our office and around 25% are SPA graduates who are my seniors, juniors as well as batchmates. That is how it started coming together.**



HR, managing people, operations to growth marketing, sales and building a brand. In today's date, education is a lot about building a brand, as people choose what they want to be associated with. This is the clarity that we got at an early stage. Brand perception plays a significant role in decision-making. It is crucial to be able to understand what goes into building the right business that is sustainable. We bootstrapped for some time - the first two years we had to make ends meet. For the first 2 years, we worked out of the garage. Then, we moved to an apartment in South Delhi and worked there for 6 to 7 months. In between, while building a product, we took an Airbnb for 5

months. We had a house help who would feed us, and we would work 16 hours a day for 5 months straight to figure out the product. These were the phases of the organization and each phase had different sorts of challenges. Till the time we were figuring out the product and its value offering, the crux challenge was being iterative. We had to figure out if it is working or not working, where is it failing, quickly analyse on what went wrong and get back to it again. If we were failing, we had to make a new iteration and made some 78 iterations in the process. By the end, we were so burned because of the intensive and continuous work for months. So, we took a break and then launched another

“

**Challenges were endless; from having to understand finances, legality, HR, managing people, operations to growth marketing, sales and building a brand.**

*The team at Oneistox*



iteration, which picked up. When it picked up, the challenge suddenly changed from being iterative to being consistent because that's what's crucial to sustainable growth. And now, in the past 12 months of Oneistox, we grew every month by approximately 30 to 35% in terms of users as well as revenue. That is what the trajectory looked like.

**Would you like to share any success stories when you felt your hard work had finally paid off?**

While we were building, getting through the YCombinator, and getting the tag of Ycombinator startup was crazy for us. Soon after, Harvard funded us. After that, they were a number of investors who started writing to us and wanted to fund us and be involved in the success of the company. I think there were these two specific instances where these commitments came in and we were just through the roof on the impact we had created.

Apart from that, when the first student got the job through the platform, it was a success for us. This again has a different sort of impact. The straight-up impact is that of the career of that individual. Then the type of impact because of his career establishment is on their family. The type of impact that could happen because of the work that individual will do. So, if we start with one life, I think that we will be having that impact on 1,00,000 lives within the next 2 to 3 years. In terms of pay-scale, our students have received an average hike of 140% after doing the 6-month course on Oneistox. There are instances where our student received a job with 350% hike after the course. In today's date, we have around 50,000+ monthly

learners who consume free content on the platform and around 1500+ learners who are actively enrolled in courses and these are from across 40 different countries.

There have been times when our server went down because there was a lot of traffic and other times when people have written great things about us, and we were crying tears of joy. These are the things that drive us and make us show up every morning. In 2022, we have grown to a team of 100+ in our office. We are looking forward to growing further in 2023 and are expecting to expand our team to 700+.

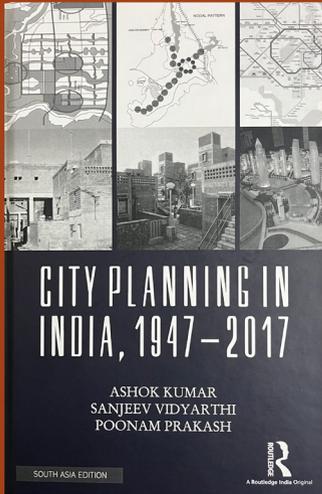
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**We are looking forward to growing further in 2023 and are expecting to expand our team to 700+.**

**With that, we come to the end of our first part of the interview. Stay tuned for the next issue, where we try and dig deep behind the scenes of Oneistox!**

*A team meeting at Oneistox*





## BOOK SPOTLIGHT

# City Planning in India, 1947 - 2017

This book is a comprehensive history of city planning in post-independence India. It explores how the nature and orientation of city planning have evolved in India's changing sociopolitical context over the past hundred or so years.

City Planning in India, 1947–2017, is an outstanding introduction to India's post-independence urban planning challenges, possibilities, and institutions. It explains the complexities of spatial planning in modern India with nuance and optimism. In anticipation of India's new urban age and expected massive rural to urban transition, it makes the case for and provides an important resource for the growth of the planning profession in the country. The book, however, is much more than a basic textbook. In addition to planning students and professionals, scholars, activists and citizens interested in urban development will find it a useful reference and resource.

**Vinit Mukhija, Professor and Chair, Department of Urban Planning UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Los Angeles**

This book ushers a new era of joint scholarship between scholars from India and the US to better understand the trajectory of urban development and planning in India. This is not a rehash of all the insurmountable problems facing Indian cities. On the contrary: this is a nuanced and ultimately hopeful view of how urban planning has evolved over the last 70 years in a decolonized and democratic nation where majority of the citizens still live in rural areas. The book blends historical understanding with new aspirations for economic growth and social mobility to argue for a stronger role of urban planning in India's development.

**Bish Sanyal, Ford International Professor of Urban Development and Planning, Director, Spurs/Humphrey Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

## REVIEWS

The book provides a welcome and valuable overview of planning for cities in India since its independence in 1947, starting with the long-standing legacies of British colonial rule. The book will serve as a clear, easy to follow and extremely informative primer to students and practitioners of planning in India, especially as a jumping-off point for more detailed and critical analysis of recent government initiatives such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Special Economic Zones, and Smart Cities Mission. Ultimately, the book fulfils three roles simultaneously and admirably: an excellent overview of past trajectories, a clear and detailed taking account of current practices, and most significantly, for those planning the future of Indian cities, a launching pad for investigating the potentialities as well as pitfalls of future efforts.

**Aseem Inam, Professor and Chair in Urban Design, Cardiff University and Director, TRULAB: Laboratory for Designing Urban Transformation**

This book provides a clear and readable account of India's multi-layered experience of the planning of urban development. It is infused with a wide knowledge of the planning field, while being deeply sensitive to India's particular political economy and diverse urban realities. Kumar, Vidyarthi and Prakash show how present initiatives in developing urban planning legislation and practice are built on, and have to contend with, a complex history, in which India only emerged as a single nation in the colonial and post-colonial periods, and where ways of planning urban development have been inherited from past colonial and local regimes. Their account is richly illustrated and referenced, and draws on research and evaluation studies where available. The book is supplemented by an appendix which consists of very helpful mini-essays on key concepts and topics. It will surely become an essential text for planning students in India, while serving as a very valuable introduction for all those interested in the "planning story" of this vast and populous sub-continent.

**Patsy Healey, Professor Emeritus of Planning, Newcastle University, UK**



# From Affection to Action

## Making Urban Areas More Disabled Friendly.

BY HUSAIN AANIS KHAN  
AND OSAMA NOOR

**RECENTLY**, on 3rd December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was observed to spread awareness about the rights and wellbeing of people with disabilities in all walks of life. With increasing urbanisation in India, accessibility of urban spaces for persons with disabilities is growing into a pressing policy problem. When spaces are accessible, persons with disabilities secure independence, dignity, equality and freedom.

The International and Indian law requires government and private establishments to provide accessibility to persons with disabilities. The primary international legal instrument is the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ('UNCRPD'); it provides that accessibility is the precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate equally with non-disabled persons in the society.

Such accessibility is necessary in urban spaces to help persons with disabilities shun the barriers they face while navigating urban spaces. In this article, we explain that planners of urban spaces can ensure accessibility by assessing urban designs through two tools, i.e., reasonable accommodation and universal design.

### THE INDIAN LEGAL MANDATE

India fulfilled its international commitment by enacting the "Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016" (RPwD Act). Persons with disabilities face barriers while navigating urban spaces. The Act defines 'barrier' as any factor including communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, social, attitudinal or structural factors which hamper the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society. It is these barriers that planners have to preempt while planning urban spaces. This was the statutory response of India.

The remarkable judicial response was given by the Supreme Court of India. In the landmark case of *Vikash Kumar v. UPSC* (2021), it declared that providing reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities is a positive obligation of the state; not providing reasonable accommodation violates the RPwD Act as well as the constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination to which persons with disabilities are entitled.

### THE INDIAN MODEL OF DISABILITY

The definition of barriers in RPwD Act recognises a social model of disability; its underpinning principle is that persons are disabled by social barriers (such as indifference, stereotype, discrimination), a manifestation of which are physical barriers (such as inaccessible

buildings, transportation, digital applications), as opposed to the medical impairment (such as blindness, locomotor disability, etc).

### TWO TOOLS FOR JUSTICE: REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN.

The denial of opportunities for equal participation in public spaces—both urban and rural—and consumer services results in discrimination. It is insufficient to avoid discriminatory treatment against persons with disabilities. Non-discrimination has to be combined with additional support in the form of reasonable accommodation in relevant cases and universal design at relevant stages of urban planning. In fact, as the law stands today, not providing reasonable accommodation and adopting universal design is discriminatory in itself.

### MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

To enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and effectively in urban spaces, the State and private parties have to fulfil the positive obligation of providing persons with disabilities with additional support.

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**Accessibility is necessary in urban spaces to help persons with disabilities shun the barriers they face while navigating urban spaces.**

Reasonable accommodation refers to the modifications and adjustments that are made to laws and consumer-services to support persons with disabilities in enjoying rights equally with non-disabled persons. The RPwD Act defines it as “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of rights equally with others”.

**IN URBAN PLANNING,** accommodation is provided to help persons with disabilities to access urban spaces. The accommodation is provided as adjustments or modifications in services on an individualised or a case-to-case basis. Persons with disabilities may have different impairments. It can be hearing impairment, visual impairment, etc. Moreover, the impairment can be in varying severities. It can be a benchmark disability, ie, the person may be blind and legally disabled over 40%. Because the RPwD Act requires the accommodation to be ‘reasonable,’ it must be individualised to meet the needs of each person with disability. However, reasonable accommodation may not be sufficient if the design of urban spaces lacks universality.

**UNIVERSAL DESIGN: DESIGNING WITH DIGNITY FOR ALL**

Beyond the idea of barrier-free design, Universal Design is a design strategy for the built environment that aims to increase access for as many people as feasible. The RPwD Act, defines ‘universal design’ as “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design

**According to the World Bank, India has around 40-90 million people with disabilities**



“  
**Universal Design is a design strategy for the built environment that aims to increase access for as many people as feasible.**

and shall apply to assistive devices including advanced technologies for particular group of persons with disabilities.”

Universal design in urban spaces is ensured when relevant stakeholders work on projects in an accessibility-conscious approach from the beginning of the project. It is adopted, at least as early as during the design-phase of urban spaces. Such an approach avoids the need for retrofitting or structural adjustments in the future. Universal Design emphasises a comprehensive grasp of the unique needs of a wide range of users of a particular site and is not restricted to adhering to legal requirements or accessibility guidelines.

**IMPLEMENTING** Universal Design principle is economical, adaptable, and inclusive. According to the World Bank, using this strategy at the planning stage only adds zero to a one percent additional expenditure. Constructing accessible buildings doesn’t require more space, it just requires rearranging the current layout.

However, it is substantially more expensive to adapt, modify, or renovate an inaccessible infrastructure to make it accessible. Additionally, Universal Design changes according to local circumstances, is responsive to the demands of the local community, and necessitates active involvement from local stakeholders. Building inclusive cities therefore requires early adoption of Universal Design, rooted in local circumstances, through a participatory and consultative approach.

**INVISIBLE AND VISIBLE DISABILITIES**

When policymakers consider accessibility to offer accommodations, they tend to think about visible disabilities, such as

wheelchair ramps for people with locomotor impairments. However, wide swaths of invisible disabilities, including mental illness, tend to get excluded from the policy sphere.

**DESPITE** the fact that India's several legislative frameworks recognise a wide range of disabilities, accessibility criteria appear to be concentrated on some classes of disabilities with little to no attention paid to others. With little to no mention of the social elements of access, design interventions appear to be solely concerned with the physical aspects of accessibility. Particularly, it appears that little thought has been given to the accessibility requirements of those with hidden or invisible disabilities.

A physical, mental, or neurological disease that is not readily apparent to others but that yet has the potential to restrict or challenge a person's movements, senses, or activities is known as an invisible or hidden disability. For instance, it is widely known how the architectural and social environment in cities affects mental health results. According to studies, having access to urban green spaces helps people with mental diseases including depression and reduces symptoms of dementia, schizophrenia, ADHD, anxiety disorders, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) when they are exposed to natural environments. Drawing on such research, the concept of 'restorative urbanism' places mental health, wellness and quality of life at the forefront of city planning and urban design.

**IT'S CRUCIAL** to use as much flexibility as possible when constructing or updating public areas and services to be accessible while also taking the particular location's environment into consideration. For instance, Tamil Nadu and Uttar



*Disability Inclusion Matters to Achieve an Accessible Future for All*  
Source: The World Bank

Pradesh have different cultures about disability. Specificity must be considered in accessibility initiatives. It is crucial to consider access needs explicitly through speaking with groups of people with disabilities and organisations serving the interests of people with disabilities, whose leadership and membership are primarily made up of people with disabilities.

Since a variety of rights and services for people with disabilities depend on accessibility to urban infrastructure, which is governed by a framework of planning and municipal legislation in effect in the city, accessibility becomes of utmost importance. However, the "inclusion by accommodation" strategy also sometimes reinforces the notion that people with disabilities are "special," while the "normal" person is someone who easily conforms to the accepted norm. Our goal should be to shift the emphasis away from seeing disability as something that is "non-normal," for whom

"access" is made possible by formal "inclusions" and "accommodations" in specific public settings that are based on certification and demand that individuals with disabilities "prove themselves." Instead, urban spaces should examine the broadest possible embodiment based on Universal Design principle, as supported by disability researchers and activists, to enable access for disabled people from a "personal need" to access as a "public right" throughout urban design processes. Because by using Universal Design, society becomes accessible to everyone, not only those who are disabled.

**IN LIGHT OF THIS,** it is crucial for planners to devise disability-friendly measures that are appropriate to needs, inclusive in scope, and respectful of differences and ambitions. A failure to abide by these principles would be considered discrimination under the Indian rights-based and justice-centric definition of disability.

*The Chilavanoor Kayyal (backwaters), which is part of the Vembanad-Kol wetlands, a Ramsar site, flows through the heart of Kochi.*



ECONOMICS

# Inclusion of ecosystem accounting in spatial planning

*BY ANN ROCHYNE THOMAS*

**The ecological debts of cities are expanding as a consequence of the massive appropriation of ecosystem service provision far beyond city limits. Urban ecosystem services deliver only a small fraction of the total ecosystem services utilized by cities, but their social and economic value is significant, because of the high beneficiary density relative to the local blue-green infrastructure.**





## URBAN BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Natural capital infrastructure helps to mitigate floods and heat island effects, enhances biodiversity and air quality, and promotes public health and well-being. The degradation or loss of blue infrastructure has expensive consequences, when public services are restored through built infrastructure to compensate for it.

Green infrastructure degradation can also contribute to a reduction in resilience-related insurance values, rendering cities more exposed to extreme climate events and social disruptions. A sense of identity, community cohesiveness, and preservation of local ecological knowledge all suffer.

The decline of ecosystem services are largely overlooked in municipal budgeting and planning because conventional accounting ignores the costs of replenishing ecosystem services once they are lost or deteriorated.

These hidden costs incentivize the conversion of urban ecosystems

into built infrastructure, resulting in further loss of ecosystem services.

Incorporating natural capital valuation into spatial planning can benefit both urban residents and the local environment. Decision-makers must understand how, when, and what types of nature-based solutions might solve their city's unique challenges.

However, justifying its inclusion in spatial planning is complicated. Natural capital is typically viewed as a value-added service rather than a core component of design because it is difficult to quantify, both spatially and temporally. Furthermore, natural ecosystems such as wetlands are given greater attention than natural capital in urban ecosystems.

Even when they are assessed, their non-economic values are largely unexplored. The fragmentation and heterogeneity of urban ecosystems create additional challenges for valuation to inform urban planning.

### A SYSTEMS-BASED APPROACH

Urban governance necessitates an integrated planning strategy that

*Urban green infrastructure  
in Kochi's central business  
district.*

tackles development issues from a “systems-based” perspective rather than focusing primarily on the most economical solutions. Investments in nature frequently have positive externalities that go unrecognized. In addition, urban ecosystems not only offer environmental benefits but also disservices such as pollen allergies and conditions for wear and tear. The benefits of ecosystem services as well as the costs of ecological disservices should both

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**Incorporating  
natural capital  
valuation into  
spatial planning can  
benefit both urban  
residents and the  
local environment.**

be considered in thorough valuation analyses.

A more explicit analysis of potential trade-offs in the context of economic and land-use activities that result in short-term financial advantages at the expense of the long-term provision of ecosystem services can be made possible by spreading the cost of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) across several municipal budget lines, such as public health, urban liveability and resilience, etc. Ecosystem accounting is a critical tool for identifying synergies and trade-offs among diverse environmental, social, and economic development possibilities and developing integrated “systems-based” approaches for sustainable development.

#### **ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING**

Ecosystem accounting can be used to collect data on various aspects of urban development in order to create a holistic picture of the linkages between the planet, people, and progress. It provides a framework for assessing environmental and economic variables in order to communicate to decision-makers the value of urban nature, as well as the synergies and trade-offs between ecosystem conservation and urban development. The critical insights provided by asset-based ecosystem accounting, which focuses on specific assets such as vegetation to create asset portfolios of the city’s ecosystem; or landscape ecosystem accounting, which focuses on a variety of ecosystem types for master planning and city zoning, greatly benefit urban development planning.

#### **CHOOSING A VALUATION LANGUAGE**

A value pluralism approach is essential because valuation languages frequently contradict one another. It is important to choose a valuation language that aggregates the various values of urban ecological

services without reducing them to a single metric.

Monetary valuation methods are founded on traditional economic theory and are commensurable. Alternative development scenarios can be assessed using relative Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) and the Potential Pareto Efficiency criteria; an alternative is deemed economically efficient when the overall benefits accruing to some stakeholders outnumber the total costs or lost profits accruing to others.

Non-monetary or hybrid methods can be used to determine intrinsic values. The two categories of non-monetary valuation methodologies are qualitative and quantitative. There are many different units and presenting techniques that can be used to describe human interactions with nature in ecological and socio-cultural terms. To provide ecological, physio-chemical or social indicators relevant to policy objectives, non-monetary quantitative methods can be used alone or in combination with monetary valuation methods. Life Cycle Analysis and other carbon or ecological footprint indices can provide additional information about the sustainability of a project or policy.

The vast majority of qualitative non-monetary methodologies employ sociocultural data in order to comprehend emotional or cognitive responses to nature. Narrative analyses and deliberative group techniques are frequently employed in such research. To improve decision-making, current information asymmetries must be overcome in order to capture specific types of non-monetary values.

The aim of hybrid methods is to strike a monetary, biophysical, or mixed balance between various data and valuation approaches. Multi-criteria decision analyses (MCDA) are very useful when dealing with

“

**Natural capital and ecosystem services can be more compellingly justified in spatial planning if they are assessed over time.**

many values since they combine multiple approaches into a single framework. However, because MCDA procedures are based on the preferences of decision makers, how and by whom the MCDA’s criteria are set is critical.

Green infrastructure’s economic value may fluctuate over time due to changes in population density and heterogeneity, space availability, constructed substitutes for environmental services, and so on. As a result, valuations must be carried out on a regular basis.

#### **DECISION SUPPORT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING**

Decision contexts in which valuation of ecosystem services can inform urban planning include awareness raising, priority-setting, incentive design, economic accounting and litigation.

Natural capital and ecosystem services can be more compellingly justified in spatial planning if they are assessed over time. A system dynamics approach that records key interactions between variables over time can reveal system evolution and the shifting values of natural capital.



Mamandur Eco-tourism Lake

**THE LAND OF SEVEN HILLS,** Tirupati has been long known for its pilgrimage and religious tourism, its diverse topography and scenic beauty. With the presence of flora and fauna, there is a higher expectation on Eco - tourism.

Mamandur is a Commoner Forest with a still water body in the valleys of Tirumala Hills. The tribals residing in the forest zone help in operational and maintenance activities in Community-based eco-tourism (CBET). They run activities like Trekking, Nature trails, Jungle safari, Wild animal sightseeing and Jungle camping. As a family, they involve in several

#### ENVIRONMENT

## Unexplored Eco-Tourism

**An outlook of an eco-tourism plan that lifted a neglected forest.**

BY DEEVI GRUHASREE

duties and facilitate Jungle Resort (Jungle huts, Tent houses, Dormitory), Harini Resource Center (Restaurant, Forest Product Sales and Information Center), Rangers Bungalow (Library, Photo Gallery, Indoor and Outdoor games), Guide Facilities, Watch Towers, Eco-trail paths, Resting places, Ring Road (Prakrutibata). They earn through ticketing and guide services. They also provide a complementary meal cooked traditionally at their homes.

These forest zones are currently managed by the Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh. It is a profitable idea to incorporate community based development in such tourism

destinations. Few other recognized sites for this kind of development are Horsley Hills, Talakona Waterfalls, and Dhivyaramam.

**ANDHRA PRADESH** Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC), in coordination with the AP Forest Department, has identified 8 new eco-tourism destinations and these are the initiatives taken at the state level. Out of which 2 are present in Tirupati, Talakona, and Nagaravanam. The state's successful eco-tourism projects include Maredumilli, Papikondalu, Kolleru, Bhavani, Rampa, Kondapalli.

The execution model followed is simple and replicable. Eco-tourism projects generally involve nature treks, wildlife tourism and jungle stay. Local Forest Protection Committees will provide accommodation and guide services. The AP Forest Department will provide infrastructure under Community Forest Management (CFM) and help in the management of eco-camps through local forest officials. Transport to and from the destination will be provided by APTDC/ tourists.

To strengthen the strategy at the city level, forest departments

and local communities, usually villagers or forest tribes involve in responsibility, risk and benefit sharing. Both these parties have a symbiotic relationship if participated in CBET. The Forest department would ensure law and order within the project and handle the financial distributions, hence gain the revenues generated from ticketing and infrastructure. While communities manage the activities and entertain the tourists in exchange for employment and promotion of non-timber forest produce. The state thus gains a profitable source of economic development.

**WITH THE LUCRATIVE OPPORTUNITY** lies a risky implementation, the Guidelines on Sustainable Eco-Tourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas 2021 provides a framework for implementation.

**To strengthen the plan, villagers and forest tribes are involved in responsibility, risk and benefit sharing.**

**SITE IDENTIFICATION:** An inclusive participatory planning process to discuss the carrying capacity, zones, potential partners, funding sources, and ecological impact. A comprehensive eco-tourism plan is devised by the department of tourism in consultation with the state environment and forest department. The tourism master plan is usually a component of a zonal master plan.

**FINANCES:** Fiscal instruments that are compatible specifically with the zone. Dispersed small local enterprises create a higher empowerment than involving a giant disassociated capitalist. Non-Timber forest produce can be a useful tool in circuiting the revenue model for funding parties.

**DIGITALISATION:** This will be used to facilitate new eco-tourism products, such as virtual tours, competitive exploration, booking services, and business processes.

**PROMOTION & OUTREACH:** For effective use of the eco-tourism potential of the area, an effective communication plan covering all eco-tourism sites of a State will be drawn by the State Governments with the help of expert organizations. The Plan, among other relevant information, will include information to the tourists on the ecosystem services and intangible benefits provided by the area. The communication plan will include measures to promote partnerships between the eco-tourism project and socially responsible companies.

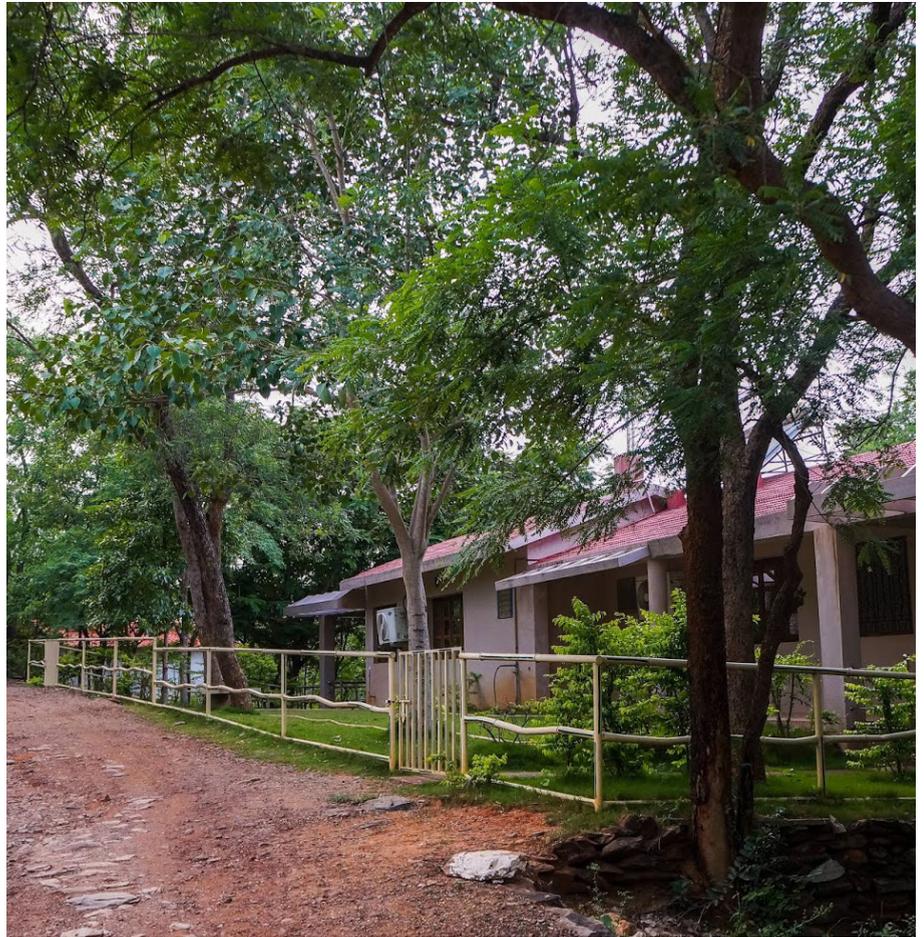
**CAPACITY BUILDING:** Empowering local communities through entrepreneurial and labor market opportunities. Natives recognize the value and assets better than foreign traders and hence have a higher probability of return on investment.



Beautiful waterfalls in Mamandur forests  
SOURCE: Vanadarshini.in

**BENEFIT SHARING:** Community based tourism always has an upper hand over whole government-operated tourism. While eco-tourism will create new wage employment and private entrepreneurial income for the respective stakeholders, fair and equitable benefit sharing of common eco-tourism revenues with the local community is key to sustainability. A transparent revenue channel between the forest department and locals avoids conflict.

**MONITORING:** Each eco-tourism plan will invariably include a dynamic monitoring mechanism, covering multiple biological parameters to monitor stress on wildlife vis-a-vis number and patterns of tourist visitation and their level of satisfaction, involvement of local people, the scope for improvement in the flow of ecosystem services, etc. The monitoring will also include mechanisms to ensure that rigorous practices are in place to prevent biological invasion, disease transmission, and air, water, noise or light pollution.



Community efforts at Kadiyam for tourism and global horticulture produce exports.

Residential spaces within the eco-tourism spots



A three-tier monitoring system (district, state, and national) is necessary to monitor the implementation of these guidelines as per standards set under Sustainable Ecotourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas 2021.

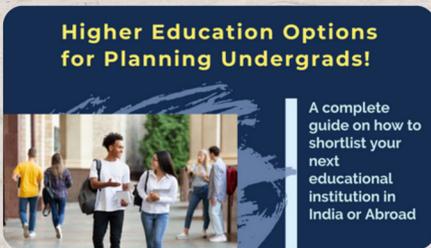
These monitoring committees comprise stakeholder departments, locals, civil societies, and corporate organizations. A fair and just mobilization of the required technical, financial, and human resource support for eco-tourism plans is the objective. All these above initiatives, aggressive marketing measures, and promotion create an influx of tourism and gain

expected increase subsequently. The tourism sector of India additionally benefits from innovation in tourism, especially when unexplored culture is tapped.

Eco-tourism being one of them is currently developing and increasing in popularity in India as well. It is a bundle of practices designed to save and conserve nature, generate opportunities for the native communities and at the same time give a cultural sneak peek for nature enthusiasts. But alas! The right strategy is needed in place to avoid the exploitation of resources and negative impacts on host communities.



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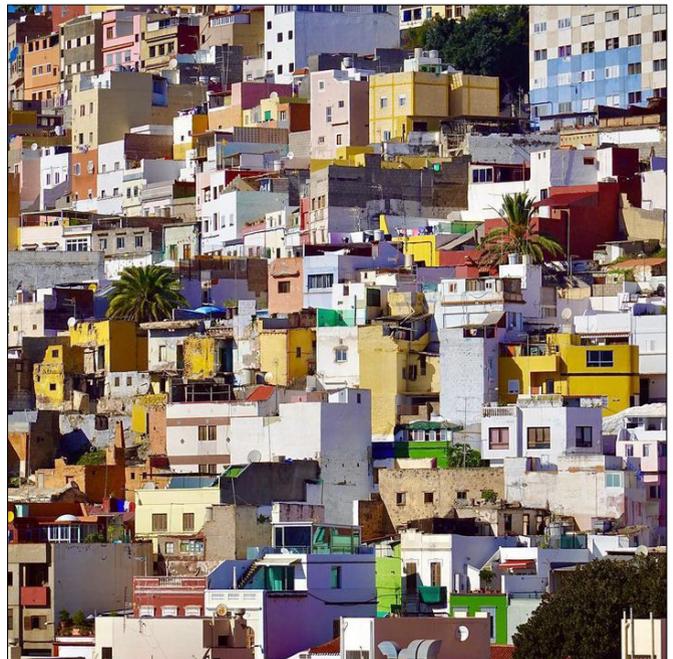
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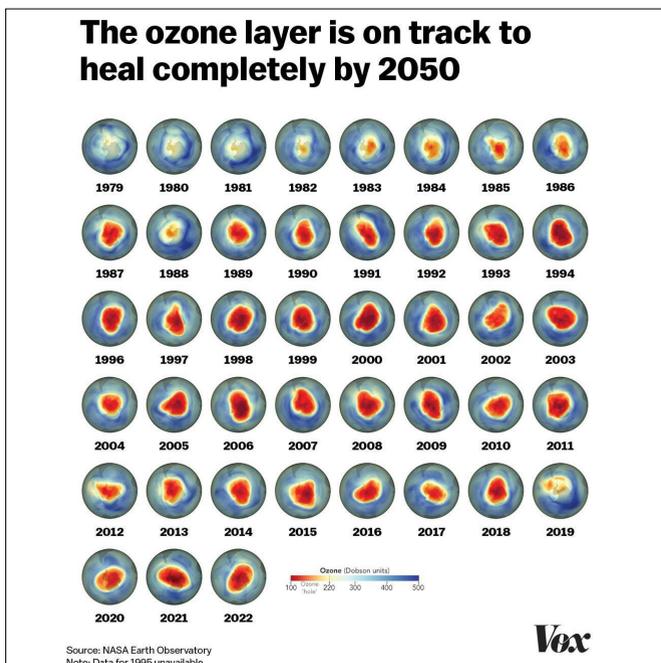
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# Participation is Key!

BY PLANNING TIMES TEAM

*To co-create with urban and rural communities.*

This is the mantra that drove founders **Aditya Ajith** and **Ritu Kataria** to facilitate inclusive development through their foundation, Corurban. After working on the participatory planning process, Planning Times wanted to understand how they had achieved its implementation at the grass-roots level.

**Please tell us about the organisation and the team.**

**Ritu Kataria:** Corurban Foundation, as the name suggests is formed of two words *Co* and *Rurban*. *Co* stands for Collaboration with communities to co-create, and *Rurban* stands for rural and urban development. The Foundation is a social impact organization that aims to work closely with the low-income rural & urban communities, to facilitate inclusive development. The vision is to enhance their quality of life, by providing a platform to recognize, believe and aspire for a reimagined future.

**Aditya Ajith:** We are a small team of like-minded individuals bringing in their own unique skill sets. The organization was co-founded by Ritu and I, both having extensive background of working with communities at the grassroots level. We rely on community champions, who we consider an integral part of our team who drive and steer day to day activities, managing resources, timelines and community dynamics.





Aditya and Ritu with the residents  
of Meenapura Village, Alwar

*A participatory planning approach for infrastructure upgrading of a School in Meenapura village, Alwar*



**What kind of work does Corurban involve in?**

**Ritu Kataria:** Our approach to development is grounded in participatory planning at the grassroots level to create resilient & empowered communities. Corurban's foundational principle revolves around co-creating solutions with the community and enabling bottom-up change. The engagement process is driven by focus group discussions, resource mapping and through the use of specialised Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Tools, which are contextualized according to the situations, often impromptu.

**Aditya Ajith:** Since last year, Corurban has offered end-to-end

“  
**Corurban's foundational principle revolves around co-creating solutions with the community and enabling bottom-up change.**

support for infrastructure upgrading of a School in Meenapura village, Alwar, to foster improved learning outcomes for students. The aim is to create a safe and healthy space for children, upgraded according to needs and aspirations of children. The efforts are ultimately

aimed at developing happier and motivated children, willing to upskill themselves and their communities. This includes an overall improvement in basic hard infrastructure, provision of digital classrooms, off-grid solar solutions, computer lab and e-library.

**Ritu Kataria:** In addition, the Foundation on a strict need basis, also initiated few philanthropic initiatives to support underprivileged children from marginalized backgrounds. We also had the opportunity, upon the invitation of the Councillor of Leh to conduct a rapid participatory assessment of government school education in Leh district, which was an enriching experience.

## Why is there a need for participatory planning?

**Aditya Ajith:** Participation in planning helps to bridge the gap between ‘what is’ and ‘what should be’, what people actually need on the ground vs what the experts/planners assess the need to be. The involvement of people from the inception in making decisions that affect their lives serves as great means to attain a long term, sustainable and smart development. It is more likely that such decisions are owned by people and communities would thus take ownership of the outcomes based on such planning.

**Ritu Kataria:** The processes enable citizens to have a voice in planning and decision making, especially when opportunities are created to include the most vulnerable, thus making the invisible visible. A sense of ‘community’ also develops as people come together to co-create solutions, to improve the overall quality of their environment. There is a need for participation in planning to foster inclusive and just development. Factors such as scale, timeframe, resources, power structures and intended outcomes also greatly affect the participatory planning discourse and hence, there must be a clear and shared vision around what it is that the community is trying to achieve collectively at the outset.

## What are the tools that facilitate or encourage participation?

**Aditya Ajith:** There are many tools available to choose from for facilitating conversations and involving citizens in the decision making process. The PLA tools provide an interesting and engaging medium to guide such conversations and initiate dialogue with different groups of stakeholders.

**Ritu Kataria:** Majority of the tools have to be customized locally and must be thought creatively in the moment. The simplest and most

widely used tools by facilitators during focus group discussions for planning processes are Community Resource Mapping (CRM), Chapati tool (problem identification and consensus building) and Bindi (prioritisation).

## When do we use tools and how do you ascertain appropriateness of a particular tool?

**Aditya Ajith:** More than the tool, it is the judgment of the facilitator on which tool is to be used at what time, that determines the collection of rich data. Different stages of development and community engagement require different tools. It is important to recognize that while engaging with a diverse group, each individual still holds a different perspective and opinion of how development should be steered. Participatory tools aid in visually bringing out these different views and initiate conversations and negotiate among themselves to reach a consensus.

**Ritu Kataria:** The appropriateness of the tool is ascertained by the outcome that we are trying to achieve at the particular chain of community engagement. Each tool is designed to achieve distinct outcomes and results. Before conducting any PLA session, the facilitator needs to reflect upon what is to be achieved. One must be clear whether they are looking to assess the existing issues and challenges, identify the root cause of the problem, brainstorm solutions, prioritize or to strategize the implementation process. Designing a PLA session requires more than just deciding on the tool, many other intrinsic factors must be taken into consideration for the successful implementation of the tools.

## What are the dos and don'ts while using participatory tools?

**Aditya Ajith:** Empathetic listening is key to any good conversation. One needs to be

## Founders Profile



**Aditya Ajith**  
Urban Governance Specialist  
Urban Manager

*Aditya Ajith is an Urban Manager with 7+ years experience in government advisory & participatory community development processes. His expertise lies in facilitating meaningful dialogue & building government-people linkages.*



**Ritu Kataria**  
Urban Development Practitioner  
Community Expert

*Ritu is an urban development practitioner & architect interested in people centric development to create 'just' cities. She has over 8 years of experience in the field of community development, participatory planning, project management, interiors & architecture.*

# Planners must act as facilitators and must acknowledge community wisdom as a key element during planning.

aware of their own biases and judgments they bring with them. This awareness enables one to have a better understanding of others' perspectives. One of the key things to avoid, to enable empathetic listening is to avoid asking leading questions. Let the interaction be open ended, two-way and free flowing, allowing participants to speak their mind with an easy exchange of ideas.

**Ritu Kataria:** Don't go unprepared. The key ideas to be discussed during the session need to be clear and communicated clearly to the community beforehand. Use of visual aids, especially while interacting with groups who are not well conversant with the language you speak are of paramount importance. It also helps in overcoming language and literacy barriers. We can't stress enough on the last point that the time and place of the meeting must also be finalized with the community members in advance, otherwise the key respondents you need to facilitate a meaningful conversation would not be available, resulting in having to go through all the processes again during the implementation stage.

**Tell us about three main factors that planners as facilitators of participatory processes must keep in mind.**

**Aditya Ajith:** In an interaction with students of planning, when asked why they should get to decide what happens in any area, one of the replies was 'because we are planners'.

This is a dominant response among technocrats and bureaucrats, which to us is deeply problematic. Planners must act as facilitators and must acknowledge community wisdom as a key element during planning. Firstly, we must accept that community wisdom and local knowledge as "data" which is necessary and integral within formal planning processes.

**Ritu Kataria:** Another factor is that the time taken in any participation planning process is unpredictable, which needs to be factored into project timelines. Most experts use reconnaissance surveys or questionnaires/ checklists to get on their drawing boards and propose a plan for what seems to them as the most probable course of action. This however could totally miss the point and fail to address the real concerns faced by the residents. Lastly, the facilitator must approach each meeting with a positive frame of mind to guide the conversations forward and be cognizant of not imposing their own biases or solutions.

**Who are the stakeholders or facilitators required for its implementation?**

**Aditya Ajith:** Community led initiatives at large must be managed and spearheaded by community champions, who may be assisted by planners or other technocrats. Community champions or leaders are volunteers from the community who lead the implementation process. They are key to the success of any project done in collaboration with the community.

**Ritu Kataria:** In addition, government line departments, local officials, representatives from different age brackets, gender, occupations, must be carefully mobilized to ensure smoother implementation of the initiatives.

**What are their roles, specifically for planners?**

**Aditya Ajith:** With many stakeholders involved in any development work, learning how to effectively communicate, negotiate and manage conflict become the key aspects that planners need to learn and master. Conflict resolution, interpersonal skills and participatory leadership are domains that must also be actively understood by planners in addition to mapping and presenting a quick summary report.



▲  
Rapid participatory  
assessment of government  
school education in the  
district of Leh, Ladakh

An aerial satellite view of a city, likely Vancouver, showing a dense urban grid. A large, green park area is visible in the center, surrounded by buildings and streets. The city extends to a waterfront with a harbor and several boats. The image is used as a background for the text.

IMAGERY

# Satellite Watch

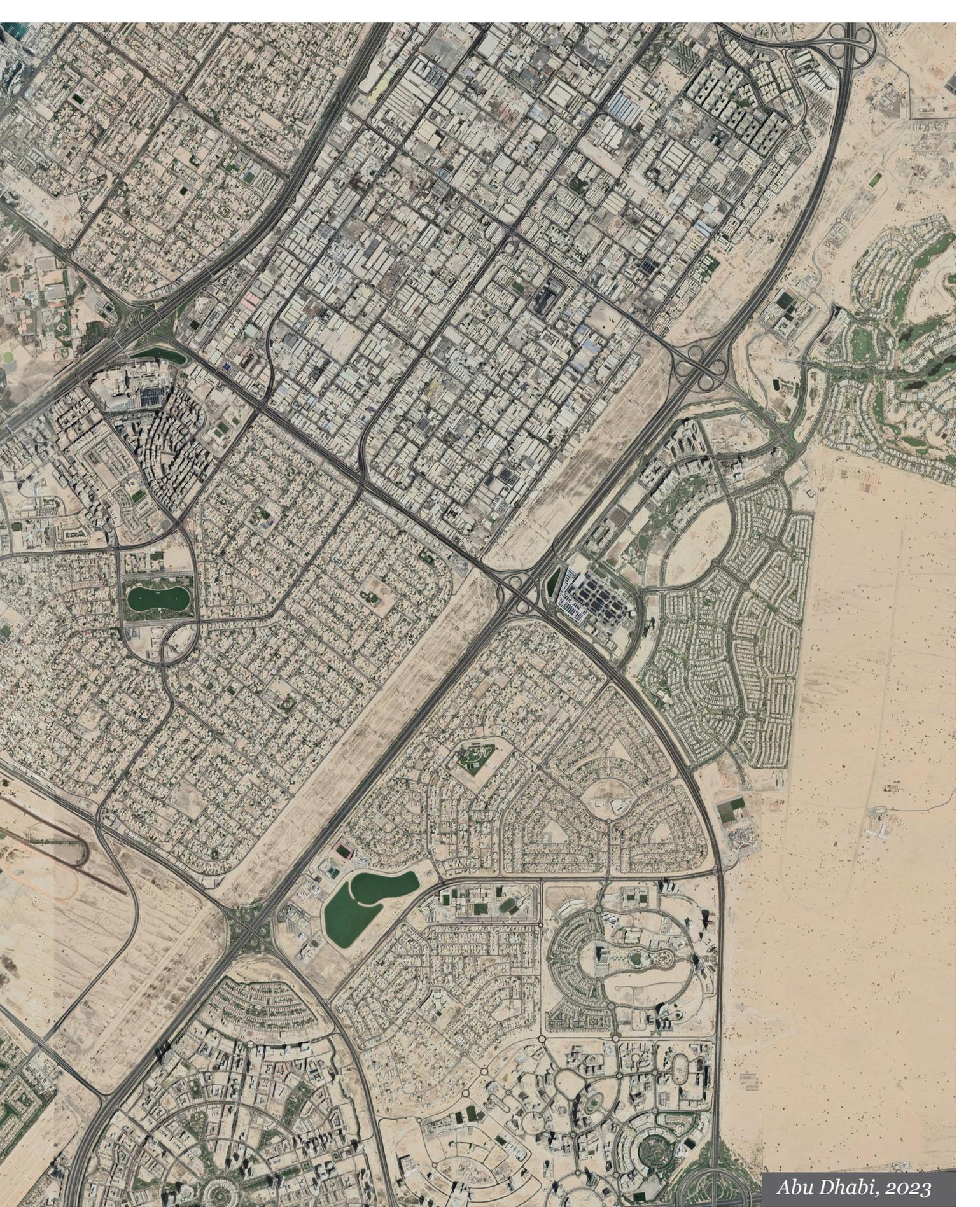
It is interesting to see how basic elements like buildings, public spaces, streets, and natural features interact to give different urban forms. Let's appreciate our beautiful cities for what they are through the lens of a satellite.











*Abu Dhabi, 2023*







‘WHAT IS PLANNING’ would be the most complicated question ever asked to an urban planner. There will always be two sides to every argument, one of which could be deemed right today, but overthrown tomorrow based on the context.

This context is affected by societal ideals and biases and will always affect plan-making. Hence, there can possibly never be a plan which is right and complete, flawless, without any scope for improvement. Plans are meant to serve the needs of citizens as humans, for whom, flexibility in planning is of utmost importance.

**HOWEVER**, when we look at the global scale, planning varies a lot. Everyone looks at it from a different lens – and the mistake that urban ‘experts’ and researchers do, especially in the west, is to evaluate western and Indian cities (and practices) through the same lens, essentially nullifying many crucial parameters impacting Indian planning. There are reasons why transit projects are more successful in compact Indian cities, as opposed to the sparser North American context. The timing of Fordism and individualism in America, affordability (or the lack of it) in India, diversity in governance mechanisms, flexibility in planning processes due to informality, are all that led to ultimately successfully planned (transit) systems in the Indian context.

However, Indian planners fail to realise the perils that come with copying the west, as we are conditioned to do in a post-colonial framework.

One planning example of this very issue is the way there is an overemphasis on participation in Indian planning in the current times – not implying that participation is a peril, rather on the contrary – however, that is one of the beauties of Indian planning on how it manages to maintain a delicate balance of political power and participation, as opposed to absolute citizen control and NIMBY-ism that have taken over the functioning of planning processes in American cities. This does make it sound like democracy is especially when we are looking at a larger picture that spans farther than individuals’ motives.

**Indian planners fail to realise the perils that come with copying the west**

**ONE OTHER PIECE** of evidence of why Indian planning has worked well is how historically the government of India and politics have shaped societal development. While the Nehruvian socialistic idea of governance relied heavily upon industrial development, it did produce good results for the country in the long run under the five-year plans, which include state-owned

# To Or Not

BY SIDDHESH R. KUDALE

regional transportation systems that further influenced city transit systems (KSRTC - BMTC, MSRTC - BEST/PMPML, etc.), or the idea of having localised ration stores (with well-managed supply chains despite dacoities and losses) to facilitate necessities for BPL families.

**WITH THE** Manmohan Singh government, market liberalisation was also an essential turning point Indian planning, would have been required to change to invite JICA Asian expertise the Delhi Metro (and subsequently others) and make a level playing field for developers/capitalists to participate and fight for the projects in the public sector (in the end though making housing unaffordable, but also plentiful), which was very evidently not possible with the DDA's erstwhile socialistic lottery system.

**The focus on human development and issues facing urban growth is markedly constant.**

Furthermore, what is essential is that regardless of the governments in India, the focus on human development and issues facing urban growth is markedly constant. Even with the AAP government in Delhi, the bare necessities have reached individuals in most homes, enabling their access to essential services. Women can now work late and travel free in public buses in Delhi.

OPINION

# Plan, To Plan?

Even the Modi government has focussed on development issues with Gadkari's focus on revitalising Highway infrastructure across the nation.

Jaishankar and Tharoor's work on decolonising the Indian citizen (and in the process also decolonising planning) necessitates believing that our planning is one of the best in the world regardless of what anyone says about various development indices and comparative scales the world uses. Nevertheless, there are some very crucial things we need to bear in mind: The idea of looking at the same concept with a diverse lens amplifies when we try to factor in the various sectoral perspectives towards urban justice - someone being an economist, a sociologist, a geographer/ecologist, a politician, someone an urban design expert. When everyone looks at a different corner of the same urban space, one fails to realise the overlap and impact that all these small sectors combined have on the larger picture called a city.

**MAKING BEAUTIFUL** buildings and roads is not the end goal, as is usually propagated in 'western' ideals of modernist architecture and glass buildings that try to establish 'clean'



façades and symbolic hierarchies by towering over one another while serving capitalistic interests. This idea of planning stems from the American westward expansion which necessitated a quick response to provide urban housing, and which did replicate existing cities in new areas, unifying the fabric of cities across the United States.

**THIS PHENOMENON** is non-existent in India (so far), where not only the Mohallas, the Peths, and the Pols change every kilometre, but also provide a wide variety in Indian cities of today holding onto their deep-rooted culture. Indian cities have seen and to date exhibit an evolutionary timeline, with the Delhi example ranging from Siri to Gurugram, considering the latter as the most modern part of the city exhibiting 20th-century architecture, which, essentially, will change as time goes by. All we must do is try not to think that the grass is greener on the other side though it may look as such, and only cherry-pick best practices and tailor them well before applying them to Indian cities. Our cities have and will continue their culture of sharing their spaces with informal vendors and affordable stores, which is any day better than running into an H&M to buy a new shirt because





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**Listen to the old lady's story who sits at the local grocery store..... you will find your own unique answer to the question (to plan or not?)**

you have a small rip in the one you own (referring to your corner tailor shop who could stitch that rip as new for you, which might disappear with time, 'modernisation' and gentrification).

**THE ANSWER** to the question – to plan, or not to plan – is rather as complicated as the question, and as subjective as it comes. In my naïve mind, however, the answer to this is to let it take the course that it has always taken and allow our cities to be the mixed pot of experiences that they are. My suggestion is, to become a good planner, pull up your jeans, don your chappals, and take a trip on the street you pass by to go to work every day. Observe the things that you would otherwise conveniently ignore due to the 'ruckus' as we think it is when we have a destination set in our minds. Smell the smells, see the sights, hear the noises, taste the tastes, and touch the surfaces, both good and bad, to feel the texture of what a city entails to a common man. Listen to the old lady's story who sits at the local grocery store, the cycle-rickshaw wallah's reasons as he pedals you home, and the panwadi's struggles as he gives you your cup of cheap adrak chai on demand. In the end, I can guarantee you will find your own unique answer to the question.

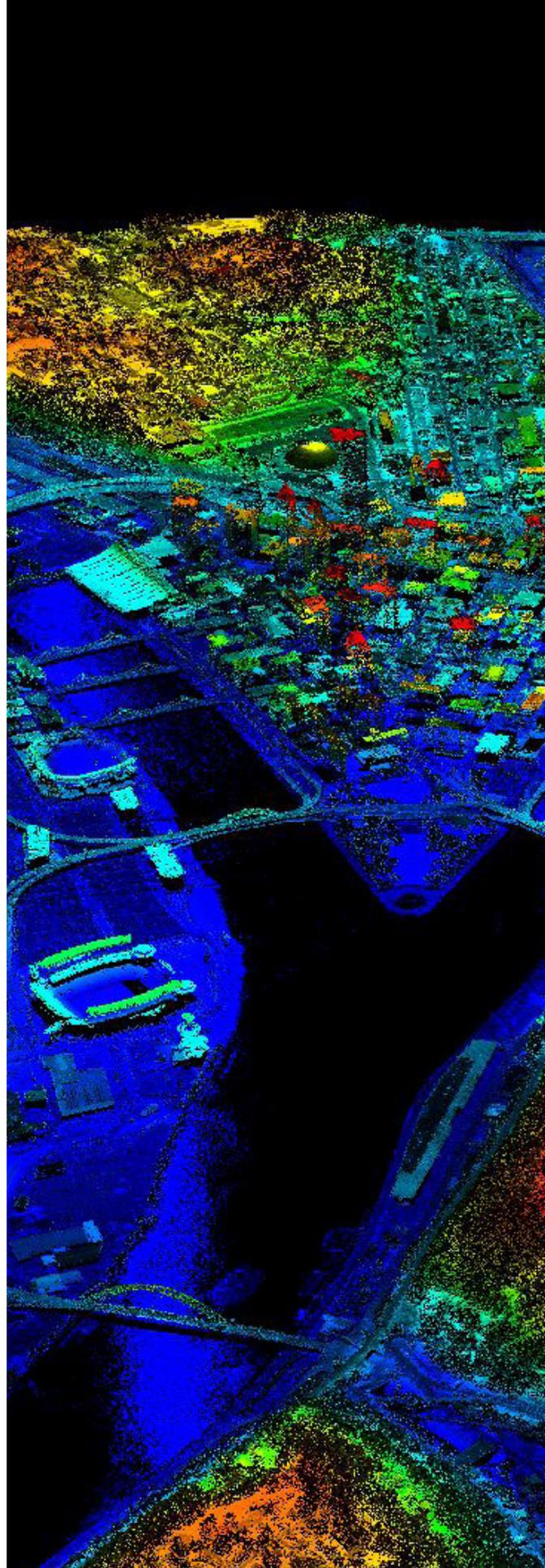
TECHNOLOGY

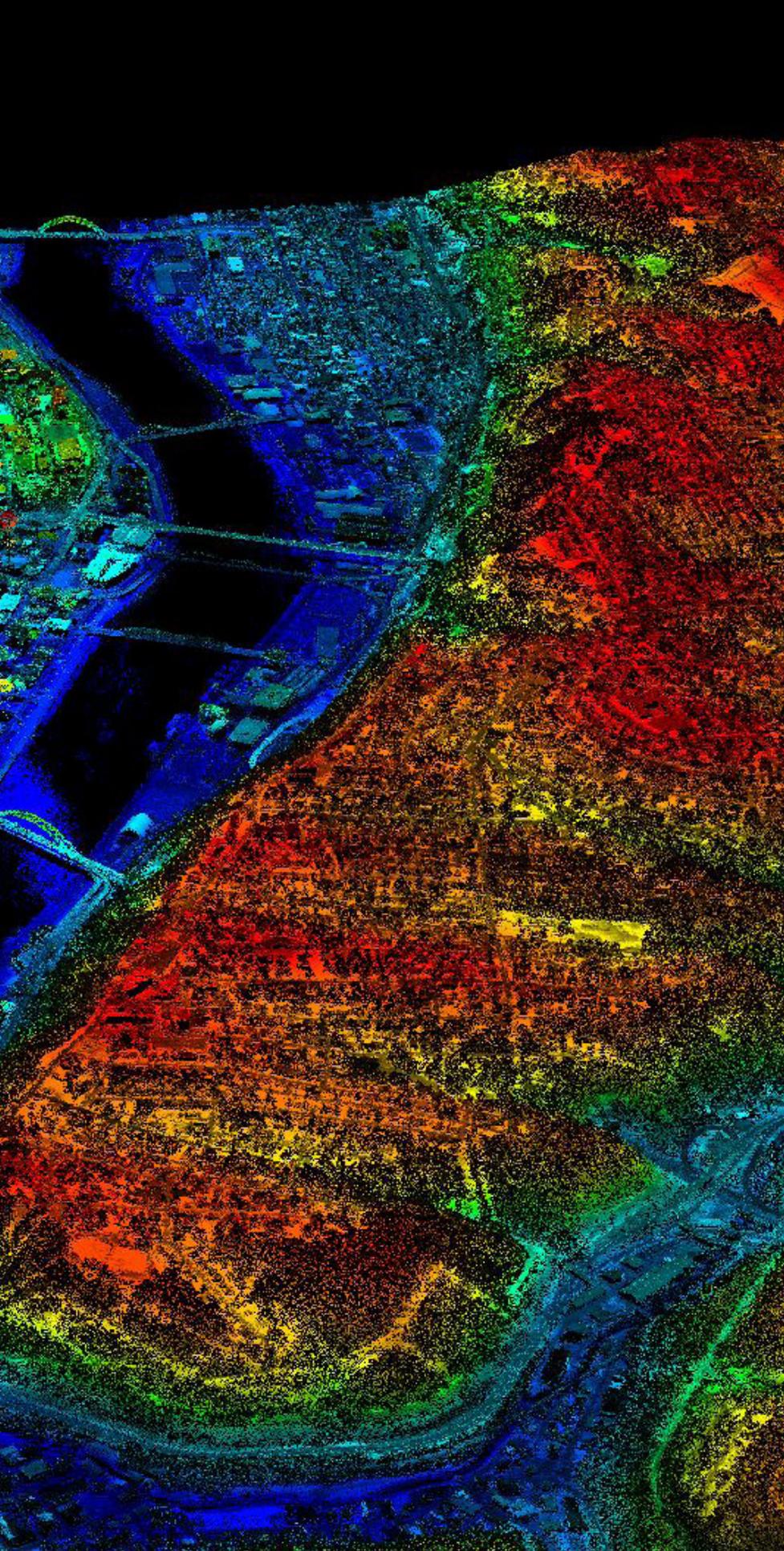
# The Road to E-Planning

BY DR. ARATHY GOPAL

**Technological advancement has implications for every walk of life. We see a huge impact on the quality of our life, easing out many of our day-to-day tasks. It might be difficult for a kid now to even imagine a society with no computers! The stories of such a ‘primitive man’ would soon be just history. With most service sectors transitioning to an ‘e-mode’, it is about time we see the potential of it in our planning profession.**

*Dr. Arathy Gopal is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture, School of Planning and Architecture New Delhi. Prior to her joining SPA ND, she was working as Assistant Director (Planning) at Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Her experience spans multiple facets as a faculty, researcher and practising professional. Her opinion shared here is personal, and not the view of the organisation.*





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**THE PURPOSE** of this article is to provoke thought along two paths—technology driven planning practice and planning research. The first topic discussed is the use of drones for the collection of data and the generation of 2D/3D maps in GIS for use in practice. The second involves the application of data science and big data analytics in planning research. I would skim through these topics very quickly and leave it to you to explore further if it interests you.

**DRONES** or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) form a useful tool with cameras that enable photography and video recording. The operation of drones in India is regulated by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). With the necessary licenses/ permission, drones can be used as an efficient tool to collect data. Recording can be done within a short span of time and with minimal manpower. The tool may have limited applications at a macro scale. However, at a micro scale – street or neighbourhood level – the data generated by continuous recording can be used to generate maps. There is software which translates the video recording to a point cloud and further to 2D/3D maps in very less time.

Drones can help generate duplication of the urban form in our computers in very less time. Research studies show, planning policies need to be guided by the urban form. Oliveria et al., (2010) state that there is a need for relating urban form studies with urban design, planning and development policies. Practising in the field in India, it would be hard not to notice that many of our planning strategies are mostly guided by knowledge of land use and building footprint. Due to the difficulty of collecting data regarding the height and form of buildings, the same is ignored.



However, the use of drones at a zone level and integrating the same to a macro scale will help address this issue. The data thus generated will give a clearer picture of the existing situation. This can help avoid any detachment of planning policies from the ground reality.

**IN THIS CONTEXT**, it may be interesting to note that the Town & Country Planning Organisation (under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India) has drafted a document titled 'Formulation of GIS based Master Plans for Small and Medium Towns: Design & Standards for Application of Drone/ UAV Technology'. It is available online for view of the public. A read through the same may throw some light into the possibilities. It also exemplifies the need for planning students and young professionals to prepare themselves for the change in the situation and acquire skills that may be necessary.

**THE SECOND TOPIC** I would like to discuss is the application of data science and big data analytics in planning research. Big data refers to a complex and huge bulk of information. The data collected through household surveys, building

details, etc., done as part of research studies in planning fall in this category. Big data analytics involves the process of analysing such data and making meaningful information from it. Many researchers might find it difficult to extract what is the 'relevant' information from the huge bulk of complex data. Data science is a field that may help overcome this issue.

**DATA SCIENCE** is an umbrella term used for programming softwares which allow analysis of data and extract insights. R programming is an example, which enables the researcher to run tests of correlation, causality and many more on the complex and big datasets generated at the stage of data collection. For example, multi-spatial Convergent Cross Mapping (CCM) test helps know the causal relationship between urban forces. Since the many drivers of the city form are interrelated, testing causality is often tricky. Traditionally, researchers have been doing correlation tests and concluding that one urban force influences the other.

But since correlation is not causality, it is difficult to establish a causal relationship. R Programming

enables researchers to run the test of multi-spatial CCM of bidirectional causality and see the causal relations.

It can also be integrated with drone recording, thereby scaling up the application from street or neighbourhood level to city level. The manual collection of data often limits the study to a small segment of street or neighbourhood.

**HOWEVER**, by using drone recording, the data related to the physical aspects of urban form—height and form of the building—can be recorded over a large area with ease. Using the add-ons in Arc GIS or using other softwares, 2D and 3D maps can be prepared in very less time. Longitudinal studies can record the changes and the analysis can be done in R Programming. This would open new prospects for urban planners in studying form in cities of India.

The advent of technology calls for a change in our approach to planning practice and research. We need to plan for the optimal utilisation of human resources with more dependence on technology for the better and faster formulation of planning policies. Planning is not only for the city; plan the process of planning as well!

Tired of your thesis guides?  
Not getting any internships or jobs?  
Nobody to listen to your worries?

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*Because every planner needs a safe space :)*

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**Planning Tank**

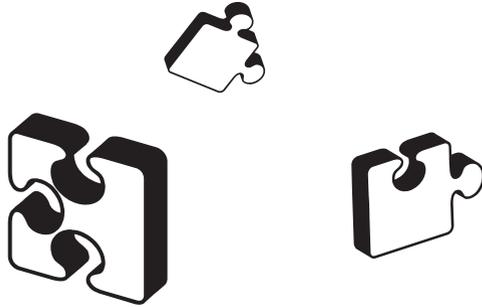
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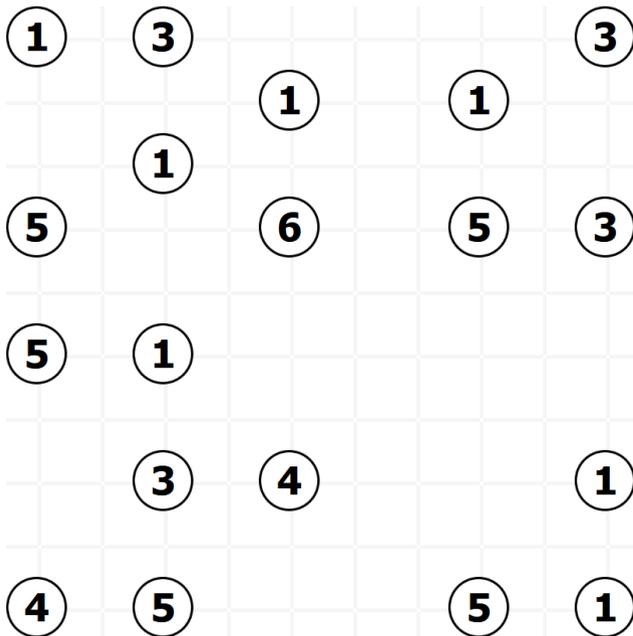
 [collab@planningtank.com](mailto:collab@planningtank.com)

# PUZZLE

Difficulty ●●●○○



Difficulty ●●●●○



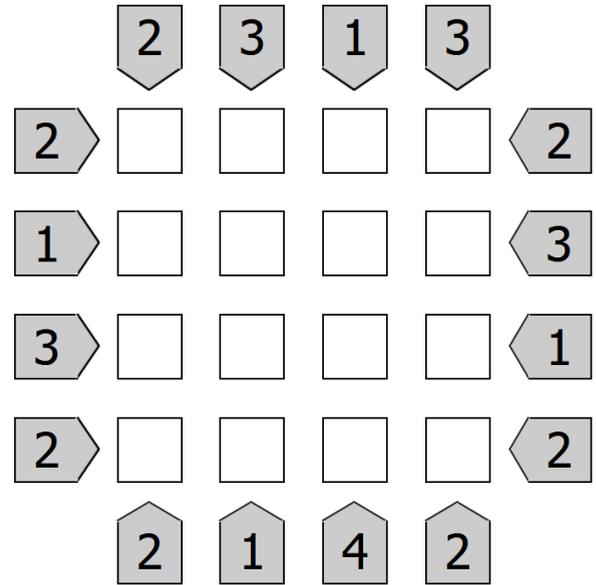
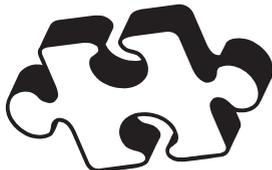
## Metro Hashi

**Create one single metro line through all stations.**

The goal is to connect all of the metro stations into a single connected group by drawing a series of lines between the stations.

**The lines must follow certain criteria:**

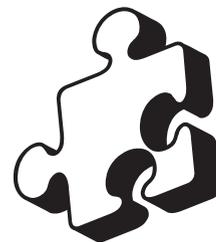
- They must begin and end at distinct stations, travelling a straight line in between.
- They must not cross any other lines or stations.
- They may only run orthogonally.
- At most two lines can connect a pair of stations.
- The number of lines connected to each station must match the number on that station.



## Skyscrapers

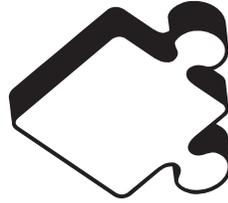
**The objective is to place skyscrapers in all cells on the grid according to the rules:**

- The height of the skyscrapers is from 1 to the size of the grid i.e. 1 to 4 for a 4x4 puzzle.
- You cannot have two skyscrapers with the same height on the same row or column.
- The numbers on the sides of the grid indicate how many skyscrapers you would see if you look in the direction of the arrow.
- Write numbers in each cell to indicate the height of the skyscrapers.

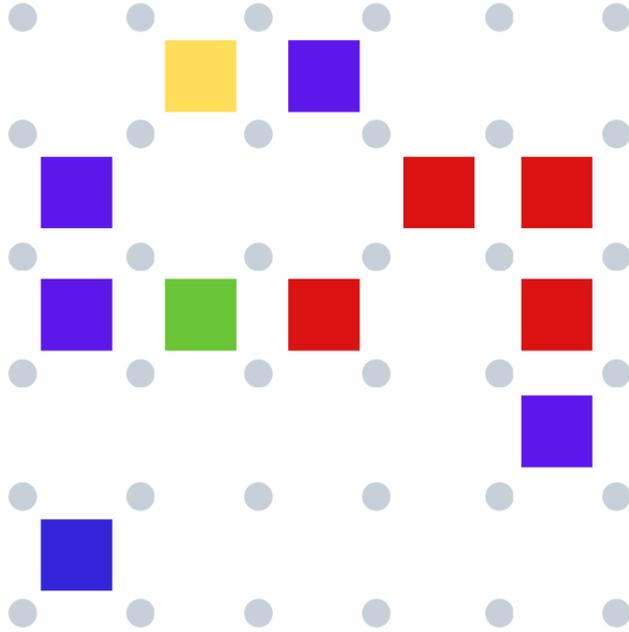


Think again!

# TIME



Difficulty ●●○○○



**Stuck in a puzzle?**

Scan this QR code to find solutions to all the puzzles below

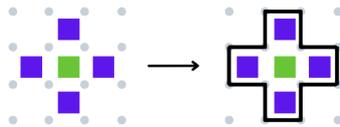
Difficulty ●●○○○

C N S F Y N E O M S T U W E A  
 S N E T B G L U P E A N K F R  
 T B H R T B N O P G R U F P E  
 A U R Z D I T L K X C E K A D  
 K N T Q C L A R U S C N U R N  
 E T D I I N I B U T F C R T U  
 H N P G N Y F H I D L A C I O  
 O A H I T O B O C A N K F C F  
 L T N J V V N M Q V G A T I O  
 D G W A H S K C I R D E M P C  
 E F F B C G F G G N X C I A V  
 R S W R M P C U C C X J S T M  
 E R U T C E T I H C R A M I V  
 G N I T N U O C C A P Y F O N  
 O R T E M L H Z V S K F L N W

## Loop the Landuse

**Make a single loop around the landuse colours.**

Make one single loop around all the landuse colours. There are no crossings or loose ends. There is only one line which is continuous.



Each landuse colour indicates exactly how many lines should be drawn around it. Cells which do not have any colour inside can be surrounded by any number of lines.

**Here's a key for the landuse colours**

- Industrial - surrounded by 3*
- Commercial - surrounded by 2*
- Residential - surrounded by 1*
- Recreational - surrounded by 0*

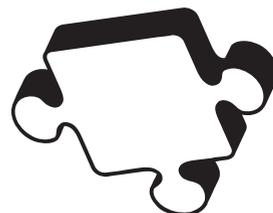


## Word Search

**Find the words in the puzzle.**

Words can go in any direction. Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

- |              |            |               |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Accounting   | E-planning | NIMBY         |
| Affection    | Mamandur   | Participation |
| Architecture | Metro      | Rickshaw      |
| Children     | Municipal  | Spotlight     |
| Co-founder   | NEOM       | Stakeholder   |



# Planning Tank

Feel free to contact us

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**Do you  
showcase**

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your planning**

# TALENT?

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